

# Strategies for the Production of Starch Noodles: A Review

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## ABSTRACT

Starch noodles produced from purified starch from various plant sources, are a major category of Asian noodles. Pregelatinized starch is used as a binder mixed with ungelatinized starch to facilitate extrusion or sheeting to produce noodles in the absence of gluten of wheat. The utilization of different raw materials, legume starches tuber starches, rice flour and tuber-legume starch blends in the preparation of starch noodles have been studied. The ideal starch base is one with a Type C viscoamylogram pasting profile characterized by the absence of a peak and a viscosity that remains constant or even increases during continued heating and shearing during noodle making, indicative of good hot-paste stability. This paper deals in detail the starch noodle production.

Key Words: Starch noodles, Glass noodles, transparent noodles, Starch, Amylose, Amylopectin, Pasta.

## Introduction

Noodles are an important part in the diet of many Asians. It is believed that noodles originated in China as early as 5000 BC, then spread to other Asian countries and world. Many varieties of noodles are produced with different composition, method of preparation and presentation depending on regional preference (Edwards et al 1996). In recent years, noodles have played an important role in the human diet, especially in Asian countries such as Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand and India. The different kinds of noodles classified according to raw material used, noodle size, manufacturing process and finished products are shown in Table 1. Based on raw material used noodles are classified into two types: the protein-based and the starch-based noodles. Protein-based noodles are from wheat (Noda et al 2001, Janto et al 1998). Starch-based noodles are from mungbean (Galvez et al 1994), pigeon pea (Singh et al 1989), red bean (Lii and Chang 1981), sweet potato (Collado and Corke 1997, Collado et al 2001), sorghum (Beta and Corke 2001), potato (Kim and Wiesenborn 1996, Peng et al 1997) sweet potato, maize and cassava (Kasemsuwan et al 1998).

Starch noodles, produced from purified starch from various plant sources, are a major category of Asian noodles. In the absence of gluten,

pregelatinized purified starch is used as a binder mixed with ungelatinized starch to facilitate extrusion on sheeting to produce noodles. The utilization of different raw materials such as rice flour (Juliano 1993), legumes (Singh *et al* 1989, Galvez *et al* 1994, Gujska et al 1994, Jin et al 1994) and tuber and tuber-legume starch blends (Kim and Wiesenborn 1996, Collado and Corke 1997) has been studied. From these studies, it was found that the ideal starch base is one with a Type C viscoamylogram pasting profile characterized by the absence of a peak and a viscosity that remains constant or even increases during continued heating and shearing, indicative of good hot-paste stability. Type C starches show restricted swelling and behave like chemically cross-linked starches that exhibit reduced swelling and solubilization (Schoch and Maywald 1968). Sweet potato noodles are extensively produced in China, where it is estimated that 28% of the processed sweet potato is made into starch noodles (Wang et al 1998). Studies on food products based on root crops are of interest to many developing countries because crops play a vital role in food security (Oke 1990), such as substitution for expensive wheat imports. Sweet potato noodles are widely consumed in Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan (Jeong 1992, Quach 1992). Different types of starch and their characteristics are given in Table 1. Starch noodles are white in

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Table 1. Classification of noodles based on various criteria and characteristics

Criteria	Class /Type	Characteristics
<b>Raw material</b>		
Soft wheat flour	- Japanese noodles (udon)	White or creamy white in color and soft texture
Hard wheat flour	- Chinese noodles (ra-men, chuka, ramen, chuka-soba)	Light yellow in color and a little stiff in texture
Buckwheat (mixed with wheat flour)	- Buckwheat noodles (soba)	Light brown or gray in color with a unique taste and flavor
Rice flour	- mien, bihon, beehon, bifun - knanom-jeen - vermicelli	White to yellow color and opaque with tender texture
Mungbean starch	- glass noodles	Transparent and firm texture
Sweetpotato starch	Other starches: - Potato, Canna	Transparent and elastic
<b>Noodle size</b>		
Very thin	- So-men	1.0-1.2 mm strand width
Thin	- Hiya-mugi	1.3-1.7 mm strand width
Standard	- Udon	2.0-3.8 mm strand width
Flat	- Hira men	5.0-7.5 mm strand width
<b>Process</b>		
Type of binders	- Protein: wheat flour noodles - Pregelatinized starch: starch noodles	
Strand making	- Sheeting & cutting: So-men, Udon - Extrusion: Rice noodles	
Equipment	- Handmade: Tenobe so-men - Machine-made: Udon, Hira-men	
<b>Product form</b>		
	Fresh and uncooked	
	Cooked noodles (Boiled or steamed)	
	Frozen boiled noodles	
	Dried noodles	
	Instant noodles	

Source: Zhenghong Chen (2003)

colour, and on cooking becomes soft and transparent are called as transparent noodles or glass noodle (Timmins et al 1992, Galvez et al 1994).

### Starches

Starches are the major storage polysaccharides in foods of plant origin. The major botanical and commercial sources of starches are cereals, tubers, roots and pulses. Native and modified starches serve as vital ingredients of many fabricated foods. Starches are  $\alpha$ -glucans

composed basically of two homopolymers of D-glucans -amylose and amylopectin. Amylose is a linear polymer composed of glucopyranose units linked through  $\alpha$ -D-(1 $\rightarrow$ 4) glycosidic linkages. Amylopectin is a branched polymer with one of the highest molecular weights known among naturally occurring polymers, and is composed of glucopyranose units linked by  $\alpha$ -D-(1 $\rightarrow$ 4) glycosidic linkage. For approximately every 20-30 glucopyranose residues, a branch point occurs, where a chain of  $\alpha$ -D-(1 $\rightarrow$ 4)-glycopyranosyl units is linked to the C-6 hydroxymethyl position of



glucose residue through an  $\alpha$ -D-(1 $\rightarrow$ 6) glucosidic linkage. Starches exist naturally in the form of discrete granules within plant cells. These granules are viewed as partially amorphous polymeric systems. The crystalline character of starches arises from the organization of the amylopectin molecules within the granules, while amylose largely makes up the amorphous regions that are randomly distributed between the amylopectin clusters (Blanshard 1987, Zobel 1988).

Cooking or processing normally causes starch gelatinization, i.e. irreversible swelling or even disruption of starch granules, depending upon the severity of the treatment applied. The behaviour of gelatinized starches on cooling and storage, termed as retrogradation, is of great interest, since it profoundly affects quality, acceptability and shelf life of starch-containing foods (Biliaderis 1998). Starch molecules in pastes or gels associate on ageing, resulting in effects such as precipitation, gelation, and changes in consistency and opacity. Crystallites begin to form eventually and this is accompanied by gradual increases in rigidity and phase separation between the polymer and solvent (syneresis). For common starches containing both amylose and amylopectin, a composite gel network forms, consisting of swollen amylopectin-enriched granules filling and interpenetrating amylose gel matrix (Orford et al 1987, Miles et al 1985, Morris 1990). During long-term storage, amylopectin recrystallizes, increases the rigidity of the swollen granules and reinforces the continuous amylose phase. The effect of retrogradation in starch-based products is desirable as well as undesirable. The starch retrogradation contributes significantly to staling or undesirable firming of bread and other starch based products (D'apollonia and Morad 1981, Seow and Thevamar 1988) requiring low-temperature storage. However, retrogradation is sometimes promoted to modify the structural, mechanical or organoleptic properties of certain starch based products such as breakfast cereals, pasta, noodles and parboiled rice, since retrogradation results in hardening and reduced stickiness (Colonna and Mercier 1985). Freezing/thawing, which accelerated retrogradation, is applied to mashed potatoes to decrease the amount of soluble starch and to improve the consistency of the reconstituted products; i) Japanese 'Harusame' noodles to reduce stickiness

to obtain a characteristic chewiness (Watanabe 1981) and ii) Chinese vermicelli (a type of rice noodle) strands to attain the desired textural characteristics (Seow and Teo 1996).

The different methods to study starch retrogradation is classified as (i) macroscopic techniques, which monitor alteration in physical properties as manifestation of retrogradation such as mechanical and textural changes, and (ii) molecular techniques, which study changes in starch polymer conformation or water mobility in starch gels at molecular levels. Thus, rheological techniques, sensory evaluation of texture, differential scanning calorimetry (DSC), light scattering and turbidometry are used to study the macroscopic manifestation of retrogradation, while other techniques such as X-ray diffractometry, nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (NMR), vibrational spectroscopy (e.g. Raman Spectroscopy) and Fourier transform infra-red (FT-IR) spectroscopy are used to study molecular techniques. The chemical characteristics and properties of starches, starch fractions and starch granules are indicated in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

### Starch Noodles

Rice protein lacks the functionality of wheat gluten in making cohesive dough structure for the preparation of noodles. In order to create a uniform matrix in which starch granules are embedded, it is common to subject at least a part of the rice flour to pregelatinization to create a binder for the remaining flour. The conventional process for making rice noodles involves soaking ground rice for several hours, steam cooking the rice slurry to gelatinize the rice starch, kneading the slurry to obtain a cohesive dough, extruding the dough and finally, subjecting the extruded noodle for surface gelatinization in boiling water or steam to improve noodle stability and texture (Juliano and Sakurai 1985). A number of alternative, time saving methods have been reported for improving and simplifying the process for noodle making. Dry milled flours have been used instead of wet-milled starch for rice pasta preparation (Resmini et al 1979). Lee and Kim (1981) reported that a flour mixture of rice, popped rice, wheat flour, and xanthan gum improved the noodle-making properties and cooking quality. Toh (1997) patented a process for producing instant rice noodles by flour with hot



Table 2. Chemical characteristics of starches obtained from various sources

Starch	Amylose, %	Lipids, %	Protein, %	P, %
Corn <sup>a</sup>	28	0.8	0.35	0.00
Waxy corn <sup>a</sup>	<2	0.2	0.25	0.00
High-amylose corn <sup>a</sup>	50-70	nd	0.5	0.00
Wheat <sup>a</sup>	28	0.9	0.4	0.00
Potato <sup>a</sup>	21	0.1	0.1	0.08
Tapioca <sup>a</sup>	17	0.1	0.1	0.00
Mung bean <sup>b</sup>	39	0.3	0.3	nd

Source: a: BeMiller and Whistler (1996), b: Hoover et al (1997), P: Phosphorus, nd: not determined

Table 3. Some important physicochemical characteristics of amylose and amylopectin

Property	Amylose	Amylopectin
Molecular structure <sup>a</sup>	Linear (α-1,4)	Branched ((α-1,4; (α-1,6)
Molecular weight <sup>b</sup>	~106 Daltons	~108 Daltons
Degree of polymerization <sup>a</sup>	1500-6000	3×10 <sup>5</sup> -3×10 <sup>6</sup>
Helical complex <sup>b</sup>	Strong	Weak
Iodine colour <sup>a</sup>	Blue	Red purple
Dilute solutions <sup>a</sup>	Unstable	Stable
Retrogradation <sup>b</sup>	Rapidly	Slowly
Gel <sup>a</sup>	Stiff, irreversible	Soft, reversible
Film <sup>a</sup>	Strong	Weak and brittle

Source: a: Jane (2000), b: Zobel (1988)

Table 4. Characteristics of some starch granules

Starch	Diameter, μm		Shape
	Range	Mean	
Corn <sup>a</sup>	2-30	10	Round, polygonal
Waxy Corn <sup>a</sup>	3-26	10	Round, polygonal
Wheat <sup>a</sup>	1-45	8	Round, lenticular
Potato <sup>a</sup>	5-100	28	Oval, spherical
Tapioca <sup>a</sup>	4-35	15	Oval, truncated
Mung bean <sup>b</sup>	7-26	NA	Oval round

Source: a: Swinkels (1996), b: Hoover and others (1997), NA: not available

water to obtain a dough, extruding the dough to form noodles, steaming the noodles, blanching the steamed noodles in hot water, and finally, drying the noodles to a moisture content  $\leq 15\%$  by weight. The noodles had a firm clear spring bite, smooth mouthfeel and low cooking loss. The degree of pregelatinization of flour plays a very important role in imparting desirable noodle texture. Although some level of gelatinization is required to produce the binding effect during extrusion, excessive gelatinization causes extremely high extrusion

pressures (Juliano and Sakurai 1985). Resmini et al (1979) reported that rice pasta made with 7% pregelatinized rice flour produced much better quality noodles than with 100% pregelatinized or raw rice flour. Increasing the proportion of gelatinized flour from 7 to 15% did not further improve the cooking quality the network compactness of the cooked noodles. Traditionally, rice noodles are made from long-grain rice with intermediate to high amylose content (>22% amylose) (Kohlwey et al 1995). A highly significant



correlation was found between high amylose and general acceptability. Chun and Luh (1980) reported that swelling capacity of starch and amylose-amylopectin ratio are the two major factors affecting rice noodle quality. Bhattacharya et al (1999) studied eleven rice genotypes with diverse rapid visco analyzer (RVA), for pasting characteristics, physico-chemical and gel textural characteristics relative to their suitability for making

rice noodles. Apparent amylose content of rice highly correlated with swelling power, flour swelling volume, noodle hardness, gumminess, chewiness and tensile strength of noodles prepared. Solubility showed an inverse relationship with the pasting parameters and noodle rehydration and a positive relationship with cooking loss, noodle hardness, and gumminess. Flour swelling volume and most of the pasting parameters and textural parameters

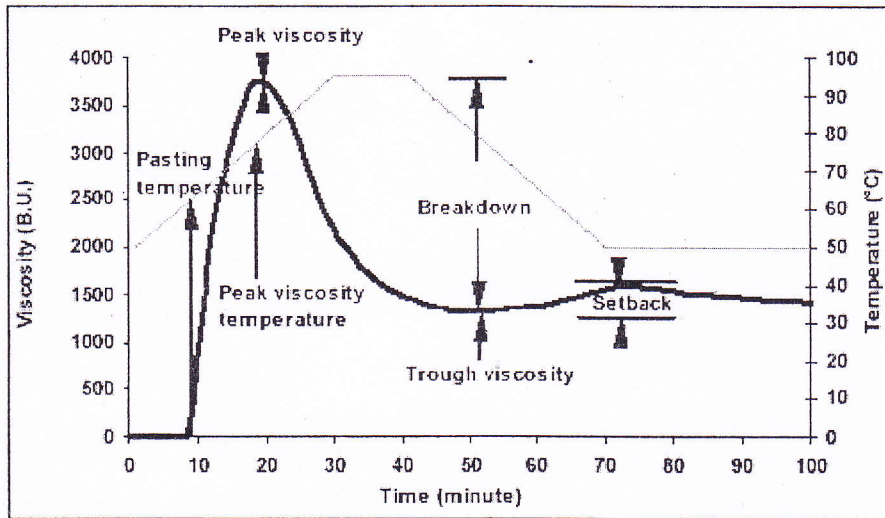


Fig. 1: Rapid visco analyser graph for potato starch (4%, w/v) Source: Zhenghong Chen (2003)

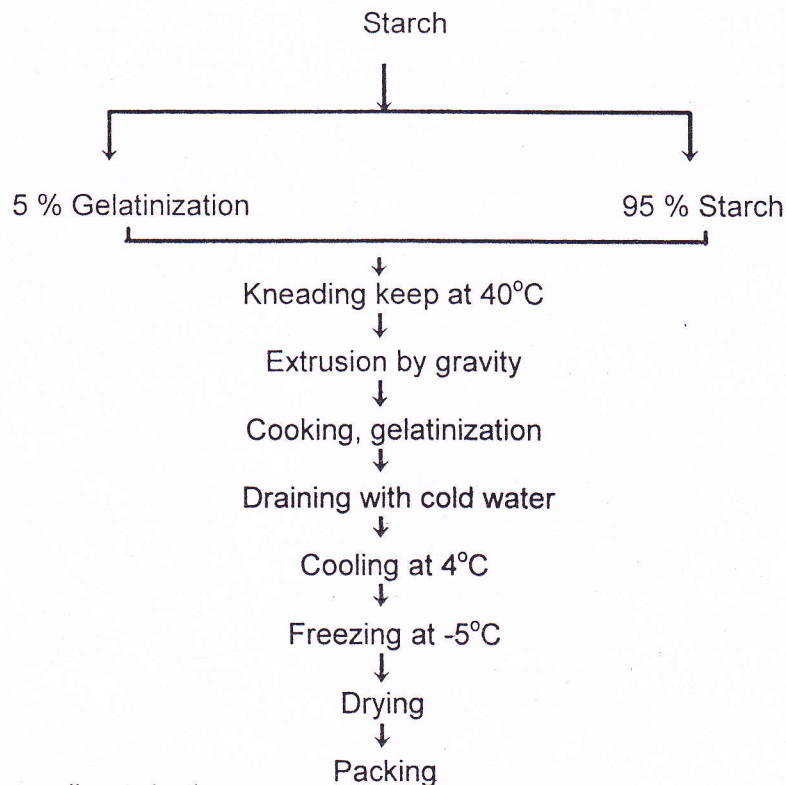


Fig. 2: A typical Starch noodle production



of gels formed in rapid visco analyser canister were well correlated with actual noodle texture. Rapid visco analyser graph of potato starch is shown in Fig. 1. Starch noodle production flow chart is given in Fig. 2.

*Clear noodles made from mung bean (Vigna radiata) starch are popular in oriental foods. The noodles are uniquely translucent and resilient after cooking, have a bland taste. The clear noodle also called as glass noodles are expensive due to tedious processing methods. Clear noodles are also prepared with other starches such as Canna, red bean, sweet potato, pigeonpea, and modified starches (Lii and Chang 1981, Singh et al 1989, Kasemsuwan et al 1998).*

Sweet potato starch has limited use in the Philippines, but modification of its properties by hydrothermal treatment (Stute 1992) makes it more suitable for use in traditional noodles. In the Philippines, rice flour, maize flour, mung bean and starch are used for starch noodles locally known 'Bihon' for those with thin strands and 'Pancit malabon' those with thick strands. 'Sotanghon' the high-quality noodles from mung bean are the most expensive starch noodles, which are known for their high tensile strength, clarity and chewy texture (Collado et al 2001). Starches made into noodles offer certain nutritional benefits to consumers. Bihan noodles from rice have been demonstrated to lower

glycemic index of diabetic patients (Panlasigui et al 1990). Starch noodles are retrograded and are, therefore, a source of resistant starch. There is considerable interest in the nutritional implication of resistant starch in foods, since relatively slow rate of starch hydrolysis in the gastrointestinal tract of humans show some physiological effects on dietary fibre (Englyst et al 1992).

Texture of cooked noodles is the most critical characteristic that determines consumer acceptance of the product. The direct and ultimate method for assessing texture of noodles is by sensory evaluation. However, sensory evaluation is impractical when sample size is limited or when large members of line to be evaluated in breeding programs (Edwards et al 1996). Due to the constraints of sensory evaluation, a number of instrumental methods have been developed for measuring the textural properties of noodles that are less time-consuming more cost-effective and require small sample size (Lii and Chang 1981). Bhattacharya et al (1999) showed textural parameters of gels formed in the rapid visco analyser, which canister correlated highly with the pasting characteristics of wheat starch, and could be used as an indirect measure of textural quality rice starch noodles and also to identify the specific characteristics responsible for producing superior quality rice starch noodles. The various

Table 5. The commonly used modifications of starch in food application

Type of modification	Main objectives	Treatments
Pregelatinized starch	Cold water dispersibility	Drum-drying, Extrusion
Low-viscosity starches		
a. Dextrins	Range of lower viscosity stability	Dry heat treatment with acid
b. Acid-modified starch	High gel tendency	Acid hydrolysis (suspension)
c. Oxidized starch	Improved viscosity stability	Oxidation (in suspension or paste)
d. Enzymatically modified starch	Lower viscosity	Alpha-amylase (paste)
Crosslinked starch	Modification of cooking characteristics	Crosslinking in suspension
Stabilized starch	Improved viscosity stability	Esterification, Etherification
Combinations of modifications 1, 2, 3 and/or 4	Combinations of objectives 1, 2,3 and/or 4	Combinations of treatments 1,2,3 and/or 4
Starch sugars	Sweet saccharides	Acid and/or enzymes

Source: Swinkels (1996)



modifications of starches for food application are shown in Table 5.

Mung bean starch has been reported as an excellent raw material for starch noodles (Lii and Chang 1991). However, starch noodles have been prepared from various other plant sources including red bean (Lii and Chang 1981), pigeon pea (Singh et al 1989), potato (Kim and Wiesenborn 1996), sweet potato (Collado and Corke 1997), and sorghum (Kim and Wiesenborn 1996, Beta and Corke 2001). Starch noodles are prepared by mixing purified starch with pregelatinized starch as a binder, mixing to dough and extruding into boiling water. Starch from potatoes and blends of mung bean and potato starch have been used to make starch noodles although the physico-chemical characteristics of potato starch differ from those of mung bean starch (La Bell 1990, Kim and Wiesenborn 1996). Potato starch is preferable over corn and cereal starches for starch noodle manufacture, because of its neutral taste, much higher transparency and flexibility of the noodles.

#### **Isolation and Purification of Starches**

Mung bean, sorghum and potato starches are isolated and purified using different procedures by Wiesenborn et al (1994), Schoch and Maywald (1968) and Galvez and Resurreccion (1993), Perez et al (1993), Zhao and Whistler (1994) and Wu et al (1995). The tubers of potato and sweet potato were processed into starch. The tubers were washed thoroughly, shredded, macerated with water filtered and passed through sieve. The filtrate was allowed to settle few hours at room temperature. The supernatant was decanted and discarded. The sedimented starch was resuspended in water filtered and dried in a convention oven at 50°C. The legume samples were steeped in water overnight, washed, ground and filtered. However, sorghum is steeped in NaOH (0.25% w/v) at 5°C for 24 h. After washing the steeped grains were ground and filtered. The sedimented starch washed and dried in air oven at 40°C for 24 h. The size and shape of isolated starch granules were examined under light microscope.

#### **Starch Noodle Preparation**

Starch noodles are prepared according to procedure described by Lii and Chang (1981). Ninety-five parts of dry starch are mixed with five

parts of cooked starch on dry weight basis, which was prepared by boiling the dry starch and water (1:7 w/v) mixture for 5 min. to form dough. The dough, which contains about 55% moisture is extruded with a cylinder type extruder with a hole of about 2 mm diameter. The extruded noodles are immersed in boiling water for 3 min, and in cold water for 3 min. The noodles are separated and air dried at room temperature for 1 day. The dried noodles are stored in sealed polyethylene bags.

#### **Cooked Starch Noodle Analysis**

The cooking procedure of starch noodle is a modified form of AACC (1983). The other physical tests of starch noodles, such as cooking test (Vasiljevic and Banasik 1980), cooking loss, starch noodle firmness (Bahnassey and Khan 1986), starch noodle stickiness (Grant et al 1993) using an Instron Universal Testing Instrument are determined.

#### **Sensory Evaluation**

Starch noodles are evaluated for glossiness, transparency, firmness, stickiness and elasticity by trained panelists (Meilgaard et al 1991). Noodles made from the small granule starches exhibit high transparency and flexibility of the dried noodles, low cooking loss, low swelling index and high elasticity of the cooked noodles. Obviously, the starch noodle quality also depends on the starch origin. Other properties of starch granules such as granule density, granule shape and the smoothness of the granule surface also affect the starch noodle quality. All commercial starches, cannot be used for starch noodle preparation because they wither lack the fluidity to form the constant long noodle preparation because they either lack the fluidity to form the constant long noodle strands or they form strands which are too sticky to separated. Thus, the proper processibility is an important prerequisite of the raw starch for starch noodle production. The proper selection depends on the behavioral characteristics and the cost of the starch (derivative) with respect to application. Unfortunately, not enough attention has been paid by food scientists towards the processibility of starch in starch noodle production.

#### **Conclusions**

The broad variation in physical and chemical properties of rice starches had a marked influence



on the textural quality of the starch noodles. Amylose content was the major factor affecting the pasting and textural properties of starch although solubility and swelling behaviour of the starch also has significant effects. The use of RVA in conjunction with DSC and other physico-chemical tests provides, prediction of textural quality of noodles. Starches made into noodles offer certain nutritional benefits.

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