

INVESTIGATION OF ANTIMICROBIAL,
ANTIOXIDANT AND TOXICITY
ANALYSES OF *Centella asiatica*
AS POTENTIAL FRESH-CUT
PRODUCE PRESERVATIVE

WONG JUN XIAN

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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ANALYSES OF *Centella asiatica* AS POTENTIAL FRESH-CUT PRODUCES
PRESERVATIVE

WONG JUN XIAN

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ABSTRACT

Investigation of antimicrobial, antioxidant and toxicity analyses of *Centella asiatica* as potential fresh-cut produce preservative were conducted. The aims of this study are antimicrobial and antioxidant activities of *C. asiatica* extracts; to determine the toxicity study of *C. asiatica* extract using the brine shrimp lethality assay (BSLA) and to determine the effectiveness of *C. asiatica* extract as a potential natural food additive on different types of fresh-cut fruits and vegetables (FCFV). The antimicrobial, antioxidant and toxicity assessments of *C. asiatica* extracts were then assayed based on the solvents (ethanol, methanol, water and hexane) and investigating of total phenolic content (TPC) and total flavonoid content (TFC). Results of objective-1 showed ethanolic extract recorded the highest extraction yield (14.7%), TPC (69.54 mg GAE/g) and TFC (13.90 mg QE/g). The ethanolic extract also exhibited the highest readings in disc diffusion assay (13.50 mm inhibition zone), minimum inhibition concentration (MIC; 7.81-125 mg/ml), minimum bactericidal concentration (MBC; 5.63-62.50 mg/ml), and minimum fungicidal concentration (MFC; 7.81-250 mg/ml). Objective-2 result showed the ethanolic extract recorded the highest inhibition concentration (IC₅₀: 68.12 µg/ml). Based on BSLA, the result of objective-3 indicated that ethanolic extract exhibited non-toxic properties with LC₅₀ of 597.72 mg/ml. The effectiveness of the ethanolic extract in inhibition of microbial growth and browning of FCFV was evaluated under room temperature displayed (RTD) (4 h, 22 ± 1°C) and chilled storage (CS) (4 days, 4 ± 0.5°C). Objective-4 results showed the range of microbial population reduction were 4.44–7.87 log CFU/g (RTD-FCFV) and 3.00–4.92 log CFU/g (CS-FCFV), respectively. Browning-indexes were ranged 4.72–9.26 (RTD-FCFV) and 3.96–16.39 (CS-FCFV), respectively. In conclusion, the results had answered all objectives and successful. As an implication, the ethanolic extract is having potential to become alternative candidate in synthetic preservative.



PENYIASATAN ANTIMIKROB, ANTIOKSIDAN DAN TOKSISITI ANALISIS *Centella asiatica* SEBAGAI POTENSI PENGAWET POTONGAN SEGAR

ABSTRAK

Penyiasatan antimikrob, antioksidan dan toksisiti analisis *Centella asiatica* sebagai potensi pengawet potong segar telah dijalankan. Objektif untuk kajian ini mengandungi penyiasatan antimikrob dan antioksidan aktiviti ekstrak *Centella asiatica*; penyiasatan toksisiti ekstrak *C. asiatica* dengan ujian kematian udang laut (BSLA); penyiasatan keberkesanan ekstrak bagi penghalangan mikrob dan berperangan dalam potongan buah-buahan dan sayur-sayuran (FCFV) sebagai potensi untuk pengawet semula-jadi. Penilaian antimikrob, antioksidan dan ketoksisiti ekstrak *C. asiatica* kemudiannya diuji dengan pelarut (etanol, metanol, air, dan heksana), penyiasatan jumlah kandungan fenolik (TPC) dan jumlah kandungan flavonoid (TFC). Keputusan objektif-1 menunjukkan ekstrak etanol mencatatkan hasil pengekstrakan tertinggi (14.7%), TPC (69.54 mg GAE/g) dan TFC (13.90 mg QE/g) yang paling tinggi. Ekstrak etanol juga menunjukkan keputusan yang terbaik dalam kaedah penyebaran cakera agar (13.50 mm zon perencatan), penghalangan pertumbuhan (MIC; 7.81–125 mg/ml), pembunuhan bakteria (MBC; 5.63–62.50 mg/ml) dan pembunuhan kulat (MFC; 7.81–250 mg/ml). Keputusan objektif-2 menunjukkan ekstrak etanol menunjukkan nilai kepekatan perencatan (IC₅₀) yang tertinggi (89.54%; 68.12 µg/ml). Berdasarkan keputusan objektif-3 dalam BSLA, ekstrak etanol menunjukkan tiada toksik dengan LC₅₀ sebanyak 597.72 mg/ml. Keberkesanan ekstrak etanol untuk menghalang pertumbuhan mikrob dan berperangan FCFV dinilai di bawah keadaan suhu bilik (RTD) (4 jam, 22 ± 1°C) dan penyimpanan sejuk (CS) (4 hari, 4 ± 0.5°C). Keputusan objektif-4 menunjukkan julat perencatan populasi mikrob sebanyak 4.44–7.87 log CFU/g (RTD-FCFV) dan 3.00–4.92 log CFU/g (CS-FCFV). Indeks berperangan berjulat sebanyak 4.72–9.26 (RTD-FCFV) dan 3.96–16.39 (CS-FCFV). Kesimpulannya, keputusan telah menjawab semua objektif dan berjaya. Sebagai implikasinya, ekstrak etanol berpotensi untuk menjadi sumber alternatif dalam pengawet sintetik



CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK	ii
DECLARATION OF DISSERTATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABSTRAK	vi
CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background Research	1
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Objective of Research	6
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 <i>Centella asiatica</i> - Botanical Description	7
2.1.1 Consumption of <i>C. asiatica</i> as a Healthy Food and Beverage	10
2.2 Extraction of Plant-Derived Natural Products	12
2.2.1 Extraction methods of <i>C. asiatica</i>	13
2.3 Bioactive Molecules in <i>C. asiatica</i>	15
2.3.1 Antioxidant and Antimicrobial Activities of <i>C.</i> <i>asiatica</i>	20
2.3.2 Factors Contributing to the Recovery of Bioactive Compounds in <i>C. asiatica</i> Extract	22

2.4	Safety and Toxicity Analysis of <i>C. asiatica</i>	24
2.4.1	Brine Shrimp Lethality Assay	25
2.5	Fresh-Cut Fruits and Vegetables (FCFV)	26
2.6	Foodborne Pathogens and Food Spoilage Microorganisms	28
2.6.1	<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	30
2.6.2	<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7/Shiga Toxin-producing <i>E. coli</i> (STEC)	32
2.6.3	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	35
2.6.4	<i>Salmonella enterica</i>	37
2.6.5	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	39
2.6.6	<i>Aspergillus niger</i>	40
2.6.7	<i>Candida</i> species	44
2.7	Microbial Degradation of FCFV	48
2.7.1	Pathogenic Microbes Associated with FCFV	48
2.7.2	Spoilage Microbes Associated with FCFV	52
2.8	Chemical Deterioration of FCFV	55
2.9	Food Additives	58

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1	Experimental Design and List of Materials and Instruments	67
3.2	Collection and Preparation of Samples	70
3.3	Preparation for the Crude Extract of <i>C. asiatica</i>	71
3.3.1	Solvent Extraction – Maceration	71
3.3.2	Determination of Total Extraction Yield	71
3.4	Screening of Total Phenolic Content (TPC) and Total Flavonoids Content (TFC)	72

3.4.1	Preparation of Stock Solution of Total Phenolic Content and and Total Flavonoids Content	72
3.4.2	Determination of TPC	73
3.4.3	Determination of TFC	74
3.5	Determination of Antioxidant Activity of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extracts using Free Radical Scavenging Assay (DPPH)	74
3.6	Evaluation of Antimicrobial Activity of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extracts	76
3.6.1	Preparation of Microbial Culture and Inoculum	76
3.6.2	Agar Disc Diffusion Assay	78
3.6.3	Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC)	78
3.6.4	Minimum Bactericidal Concentration (MBC) and Minimum Fungicidal Concentration (MFC)	79
3.6.5	Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM) Imaging	80
3.7	Toxicity Analysis of Ethanolic Extract Derived from <i>C. asiatica</i>	81
3.7.1	Hatching Environment of <i>Artemia salina</i> Cyst	81
3.7.2	Brine Shrimp Lethality Assay (BLSA)	82
3.8	Application of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extract as a Potential Food Preservative	83
3.8.1	Preparation of FCFV Inoculation and Samples	83
3.8.2	Preparation of Dipping Treatments of FCFV Sample	82
3.8.3	Preparations of Storage Treatments of FCFV Sample	86
3.8.4	Microbiological Analysis	86
3.8.5	Flesh Colour Measurement	87
3.9	Statistical Analysis	88

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1	Extraction Yield, Total Phenolic Content (TPC) and Total Flavonoid Content (TFC) of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extracts from Various Solvents	90
4.2	Free Radical Scavenging Activities of <i>C. Asiatica</i> Extracts using DPPH Assay	94
4.3	Antimicrobial Activities of Different Types of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extracts	96
4.3.1	Agar Disc Diffusion Assay	96
4.3.2	Minimum Inhibition Concentration (MIC), Minimum Bactericidal Concentration (MBC), and Minimum Fungicidal Concentration (MFC)	102
4.4	Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM) Imaging of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extract-treated Microorganisms	106
4.5	Toxicity Analysis of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extract using the Brine Shrimp Lethality Assay (BSLA)	108
4.6	Application of <i>C. asiatica</i> Extract as Food Preservatives	112
4.6.1	Effect of Ethanolic Extract on Microbial Growth in FCFV during Storage Time	113
4.6.2	Effect of Ethanolic Extract on Affecting Flesh Colour Changes (L^* , ΔE and BI) of FCFV Across RTD (hour) and CS (day)	125
4.6	Recommendation	142
4.7	Conclusion	143
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	145
	REFERENCES	146
	APPENDICES	168

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.		Page
2.1	Difference between the smooth leaves and fringe leaves phenotypes of <i>C. asiatica</i>	9
2.2	Different classes of phenolic compounds classes and their respective microbial targets	18
2.3	Quality and decay attributes of fruits and vegetables	27
2.4	Difference between the diarrheal and emetic type of <i>B. cereus</i> food poisoning	32
2.5	Differences between the characteristics features of NTS and enteric fever	40
2.6	Classification of <i>Candida</i> anamorph and teleomorph form and their respective spoilage properties	45
2.7	Different foodborne pathogens that are frequently associated with different types of FCFV	51
2.8	Different food spoilage microbes that are frequently associated with different types of FCFV produces and their respective spoilage symptoms	54
2.9	Fresh-cut products that are commonly vulnerable to enzymatic browning	57
2.10	Permitted codes for all additives types assigned by European Unions and their respective functions	58
2.11	Side effects from long-term consumption of different synthetic-based additives and the associated food products	62
2.12	Application of different natural extracts in different food models for food preservation	66
3.1	List of materials and instruments used in this research	68
3.2	List of FCFV samples with the respective tested strains applied in this research	84
4.1	The extraction yields, TPC and TFC of <i>C. asiatica</i> crude extract using different types of extraction solvents	91

4.2 a	Inhibition zones of different <i>C. asiatica</i> extracts at varying concentrations against different types of bacteria and fungi	98
4.2 b	Inhibition zones of different <i>C. asiatica</i> extracts at varying concentrations against different types of bacteria and fungi	101
4.3	MIC, MBC and MFC of <i>C. asiatica</i> extracts (250 and 500 mg/ml concentration) using different extraction solvents against different types of bacteria and fungi	103
4.4	Toxicity assessment of <i>C. asiatica</i> extract (250 and 500 mg/ml) and potassium dichromate at different time intervals using brine shrimp lethality assay	109
4.5	Total microbial counts in different FCFV after 4 h of room temperature storage at $22 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$	115
4.6	Total microbial counts in different FCFV after 4 days of chilled storage at $4 \pm 0.5^\circ\text{C}$	118
4.7	Infectious dose associated with different types of pathogenic bacteria	124
4.8	Changes in the colour parameters between the control and dipped samples of fresh-cut apples for both storage methods	130
4.9	Changes in the colour parameters between the control and dipped samples of fresh-cut pineapples for both storage method	131
4.10	Changes in the colour parameters between the control and dipped samples of fresh-cut potatoes for both storage methods	132
4.11	Changes in the colour parameters between the control and dipped samples of fresh-cut lettuces for both storage methods	133
4.12	Changes in the colour parameters between the control and dipped samples of fresh-cut mangoes for both storage methods	134
4.13	Changes in the colour parameters between the control and dipped samples of fresh-cut pears for both storage methods	135
4.14	Changes in the colour parameters between the control and dipped samples of fresh-cut cabbages for both storage methods	136
A1	Raw data of toxicity assessment for brine shrimp lethality assay	171

B1	Changes in the lightness (L*) in fresh cut apples between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	184
B2	Changes in the colour difference (E*) in fresh cut apples between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	185
B3	Changes in the browning indexes (BI) in fresh cut apples between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	186
B4	Raw data of L* a* b* units in room temperature displayed and chilled storage fresh cut apples.	187
C1	Changes in the lightness (L*) in fresh cut pineapples between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	188
C2	Changes in the colour difference (E*) in fresh cut pineapples between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	189
C3	Changes in the browning indexes (BI) in fresh cut pineapples between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	190
C4	Raw data of L* a* b* units in room temperature displayed and chilled storage fresh cut pineapples	191
D1	Changes in the lightness (L*) in fresh cut potatoes between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	192
D2	Changes in the colour difference (E*) in fresh cut potatoes between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	193
D3	Changes in the browning indexes (BI) in fresh cut potatoes between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	194
D4	Raw data of L* a* b* units in room temperature displayed and chilled storage fresh cut potatoes	195
E1	Changes in the lightness (L*) in fresh cut lettuces between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	196
E2	Changes in the colour difference (E*) in fresh cut lettuces between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	197
E3	Changes in the browning indexes (BI) in fresh cut lettuces between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	198
E4	Raw data of L* a* b* units in room temperature displayed and chilled storage fresh cut lettuces.	199

F1	Changes in the lightness (L^*) in fresh cut mangoes between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	200
F2	Changes in the colour difference (E^*) in fresh cut mangoes between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	201
F3	Changes in the browning indexes (BI) in fresh cut mangoes between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	202
F4	Raw data of L^* a^* b^* units in room temperature displayed and chilled storage fresh cut mangoes.	203
G1	Changes in the lightness (L^*) in fresh cut pears between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	204
G2	Changes in the colour difference (E^*) in fresh cut pears between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	205
G3	Changes in the browning indexes (BI) in fresh cut pears between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	206
G4	Raw data of L^* a^* b^* units in room temperature displayed and chilled storage fresh cut pears.	207
H1	Changes in the lightness (L^*) in fresh cut cabbages between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	208
H2	Changes in the colour difference (E^*) in fresh cut cabbages between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	209
H3	Changes in the browning indexes (BI) in fresh cut cabbages between dipped samples and control for both storage methods.	210
H4	Raw data of L^* a^* b^* units in room temperature displayed and chilled storage fresh cut cabbages	211

LIST OF FIGURES

No. figures		Page
2.1	<i>Centella asiatica</i>	8
3.1	Overview of experimental design for this research	68
4.1	The free radical scavenging activity of ascorbic acid and different <i>C. asiatica</i> extracts using the DPPH assay.	94
4.2	MIC and MBC results of <i>S. aureus</i> treated with <i>C. asiatica</i> extract (250 mg/ml) for 24 h.	104
4.3	MIC and MBC results of <i>S. Typhimurium</i> treated with <i>C. asiatica</i> extract (250 mg/ml) for 24 h.	104
4.4	MIC and MFC results of <i>C. albicans</i> treated with <i>C. asiatica</i> extract (250 mg/ml) for 24 h.	104
4.5	Transmission electron microscopy micrograph (a) of untreated <i>S. aureus</i> and (b) <i>S. aureus</i> treated with <i>C. asiatica</i> extract (250 mg/ml) at MIC values for 24 h.	106
4.6	Transmission electron microscopy micrograph (a) of untreated <i>S. Typhimurium</i> and (b) <i>S. Typhimurium</i> treated with <i>C. asiatica</i> extract (250 mg/ml) at MIC values for 24 h.	107
4.7	Transmission electron microscopy micrograph (a) of untreated <i>C. albicans</i> and (b) <i>S. aureus</i> treated with <i>C. albicans</i> extract (250 mg/ml) at MIC values for 24 h.	107
4.8	Standard curve of brine shrimp lethality assay after treated with 250 mg/ml of <i>C. asiatica</i> extract for 24 h.	110
4.9	Standard curve of brine shrimp lethality assay after treated with 500 mg/ml of <i>C. asiatica</i> extract for 24 h.	111
4.10	Standard curve of brine shrimp lethality assay after treated with potassium dichromate for 24 h.	111
4.11	Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh cut apples from 0 h and 4 h under room temperature displayed condition, respectively.	126
4.12	Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh cut pineapples from 0 h and 4 h under room temperature displayed condition, respectively.	127

- 4.13 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh cut potatoes from 0 h and 4 h under room temperature displayed condition, respectively. 127
- 4.14 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh cut lettuces butt ends from 0 h and 4 h under room temperature displayed condition, respectively. 128
- 4.15 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh cut mangoes from 0 h and 4 h under room temperature displayed condition, respectively. 128
- 4.16 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh cut pears from 0 h and 4 h under room temperature displayed condition, respectively. 128
- 4.17 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh cut cabbages from 0 h and 4 h under room temperature displayed condition, respectively. 129
- 4.18 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh-cut apples from Day 0 and Day 4 under chilled storage condition, respectively. 137
- 4.19 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh-cut pineapples from Day 0 and Day 4 under chilled storage condition, respectively. 138
- 4.20 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh-cut potatoes from Day 0 and Day 4 under chilled storage condition, respectively. 138
- 4.21 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh-cut lettuces from Day 0 and Day 4 under chilled storage condition, respectively. 138
- 4.22 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh-cut mangoes from Day 0 and Day 4 under chilled storage condition, respectively. 138
- 4.23 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh-cut pears from Day 0 and Day 4 under chilled storage condition, respectively. 139
- 4.24 Browning conditions of (a and c) control samples and (b and d) dipped samples of fresh-cut cabbages from Day 0 and Day 4 under chilled storage condition, respectively. 139
- A1 Standard calibration curve of gallic acid for the total phenolic content assay. 212

A2	Standard calibration curve of quercetin for the total flavonoids content assay.	213
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATCC	American Type Culture Collection
AMP	Amphotericin B
ANOVA	Analysis of one-way variance
BI	Browning indexes
BSLA	Brine shrimp lethality assay
<i>C. asiatica</i>	<i>Centella asiatica</i>
CFU	Colony forming units
log CFU/ml or g	Logarithm colony forming units per millilitre or gram
CHX	Chlorhexidine
CS	Chilled storage
CS-FCFV	Fresh cut samples kept in chilled storage
DPPH	2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl
ED	Extract-treated/Extract-dipped FCFV
FCFV	Fresh cut fruits and vegetables
FDA	Food and Drug Administration of United States
GAE	Gallic acid equivalent
GRAS	Generally recognized as safe
IC	Inhibitory concentration
LC	Lethality concentration
MBC	Minimum bactericidal concentration
MFC	Minimum fungicidal concentration

MHA	Mueller Hinton agar
MHB	Mueller Hinton broth
MIC	Minimum inhibitory concentration
ND	No detection
OD	Optical density
PDA	Potato Dextrose agar
PDB	Potato Dextrose broth
PPO	Polyphenol oxidase
QE	Quercetin equivalent
RPM	Revolutions per minute
RTD	Room temperature displayed
RTD-FCFV	Fresh cut samples displayed under room temperature
RTE	Ready-to-eat
SDW	Sterile distilled water
SDW-D	Dipping treatment with sterile distilled water
spp.	Species
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
TFC	Total flavonoids content
TP	Total Plate Count
TPC	Total phenolic content
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Fruits and vegetables are essential for humans as the main source of micronutrients that can prevent chronic diseases (Vivek et al., 2019). In recent years, the global industrial fresh-cut fruits and vegetables (FCFV) market has rapidly expanded and evolved to meet the increasing demand for convenient, fresh, and ready-to-eat (RTE) products (FDA, 2018; Moreira et al., 2015). FCFV is defined as any whole fresh horticultural produces (fruits or vegetables) or the combination of fruits and vegetables that have been physically altered from their natural form without impairing their freshness (Qadri et al., 2015). FCFV is abundantly available in supermarkets and sold by street vendors and hawkers in open-air markets across many Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and Malaysia (James & Ngamsark, 2010).





FCFV is not subjected to further food washing processes and preservation treatments to the extent of altering their quality (colour, nutritional contents, smell, appearance, texture and etc.) and shelf life so that their natural flavour and nutrient contents are retained. Such handling practices would also compromise public health in excessive use of chemical preservative, which is the main problem in using synthetic additives in the food industry. Overly consuming artificial additives will cause carcinogenic and mutagenic effect (FDA, 2018; Murray et al., 2017). *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella enterica*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, and *Bacillus cereus* are well-recognised microbial contaminants that result in foodborne illnesses linked to FCFV (Mir et al., 2018; Prakash et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2015). Besides the harmful effects of foodborne pathogens, 25% of food spoilage microbes have been accounted for post-harvest spoiling loss. Despite that spoilage microorganisms are non-pathogenic to humans, they could negatively impact the organoleptic aspects of the food (Bondi et al., 2017). The release of available nutrients (sugars, minerals, vitamins, and water) from the cellular components of FCFV provides an ideal environment for microbial proliferation, especially when the food is stored above 4°C (Agriopoulou et al., 2020).

Additionally, natural food colouration is a critical component of the FCFV quality that affects consumers' acceptance of the product. Over half of the marketed food in the current food industry are susceptible to discolouration and browning due to unfavourable chemical reactions by endogenous enzymes (Shrestha et al., 2020). Since FCFV are processed into smaller pieces, the exposed surfaces are prone to free radical attacks, which could degrade the cellular compartmentalisation of FCFV and alter their appearances. Furthermore, enzymatic browning reaction is frequently





observed in degraded FCFV due to the phenylalanine ammonia-lyase (PAL) and polyphenol oxidase (PPO) oxidised with polyphenol compounds (Kim, 2020; Sommano et al., 2019). Eventually, the melanin formation in FCFV induces the alteration of sensory aspects of the food (Al-Amrani et al., 2020). Therefore, a more natural-based additive that could effectively preserve the quality of FCFV without harming the consumer should be studied to replace the unhealthy synthetic additives that currently dominate the market.

Centella asiatica is a traditional herb with a long history in medicinal practice for centuries in ancient Indian (Ayurveda) and Chinese medicinal systems (Byakodi et al., 2018). The herbal plant is a perennial herbaceous creeper belonging to the Apiaceae family (Purkait et al., 2018; Taemchuay et al., 2009) that is known to effectively treat different diseases, such as blood pressure, eczema, asthma, ulcers, leprosy, kidney disease, and wound healing (Ramli et al., 2020a; Pittella et al., 2009). *C. asiatica* thrives abundantly on damp, wet, and moist soil surfaces throughout many tropical and sub-tropical countries, mainly in Southeast Asia and certain Western regions (Dash et al., 2011; Kesornbuakao et al., 2018). In Malaysia, *C. asiatica* is indigenously known as 'pegaga' and traditionally consumed as fresh 'ulam' (salad) (Hashim, 2011). The plant is an essential source of triterpenoids, volatile oils, and phenolic constituents, especially flavonoids, which crucially contribute to its antioxidant and antimicrobial capabilities (Wong & Ramli, 2021; Sieberi et al., 2020; Yasurin et al., 2016; Edgar et al., 2014; Pitinidhipat & Yasurin, 2012).

As researchers are more interested in utilising plant extract as potential candidates for alternative coating packaging or preservatives to improve the





organoleptic properties and shelf life of food products (Pitinidhipat & Yasurin, 2012; Kalita & Saika, 2012; Mamtha et al., 2004), the application of natural resources that are labelled Generally Recognised as Safe (GRAS) would help reduce the reliance on synthetic additives and promote natural-based options. Given the increasing awareness and demand for natural- and plant-based food products, it is necessary to gain further insights on the future application of *C. asiatica* extract as a natural additive against different foodborne pathogenic microbes. The incorporation of *C. asiatica* into several types of food models would provide a valuable evaluation of the potential inhibition effects against foodborne-related microorganisms in extract-treated FCFV that reflects the risks associated with RTE food under long-term storage practices in retail or home environments. The effect of the extracted material on the natural colouring of FCFV is also an important factor that needs to be thoroughly evaluated to improve its overall performance.



1.2 Problem Statement

C. asiatica is considered a popular Malaysian traditional herb and it is claimed to possess strong antioxidant and antimicrobial properties (Ramli et al., 2020a; Wong & Ramli, 2021). Phenolic contents and flavonoids are primary sources that contribute to the antioxidant and antimicrobial properties of *C. asiatica* extract. According to previous literature studies, *C. asiatica* extract demonstrates effective pathogenic growth inhibition, such as *L. monocytogenes*, *Bacillus subtilis*, and *Salmonella enterica* Serovar Enteritidis (Rattanakom & Yasurin, 2015; Pitinidhipat & Yasurin, 2012; Sandhar et al., 2011). However, these preliminary data are limited without any





supporting investigation on the incorporation of *C. asiatica* extract in the application of food models. Instead, most of the past studies were more focused on pharmaceuticals and cosmetics product applications (Sieberi et al., 2020; Yasurin et al., 2016; Edgar, 2014; Pitinidhipat & Yasurin, 2012).

In addition, consumers are becoming more aware of the negative impacts arising from the use of synthetic additives in food and pharmaceutical products. However, there is lacking information on the potential candidates from natural- and plant-based sources that can offer an alternative option to replace commercialised artificial synthetic additives. Realising the increasing trend by consumers for more healthy and organic-based products, the food industry has cooperated with the scientific community in search of suitable natural additives derived from animals or plants (Silva & Lidon, 2016; Silva-Weiss et al., 2013). Although synthetic additives, such as benzoates and nitrates, have been widely used to inhibit the growth of pathogenic microorganisms and extend the shelf life of food products, the overuse and over-consumption of artificial additives would result in undesirable effects to the food products as well as to the consumers, such as the alteration of the food taste, development of antimicrobial resistance strains in different microorganisms, and carcinogenic to the public health (Mir et al., 2018; Ramli et al., 2017).

The food industry is currently facing a greater challenge in terms of the shorter shelf life of FCFV products due to the minimal processing operations, such as peeling, chopping, or shredding that damages the natural cellular structure of the fruits and vegetables. As a result, fresh-cut products would be more susceptible to rapid microbial contamination, oxidation, and enzymatic degradation during long-term



storage, which could drastically alter the natural qualities of FCFV, including the colour, texture, flavour, and nutritional value (Kim et al., 2020; Shrestha et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2017). Besides the health concern, the stability of plant-based materials is a major issue that needs to be examined without affecting the sensory properties of the food products (Ziegler et al., 2018; Alvarez et al., 2015).

1.3 Objective of Research

The main aim of this study is to determine the potential application of *C. asiatica* extract as a natural additive in FCFV. The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the antimicrobial activities of *C. asiatica* extract towards different types of food spoilage and foodborne pathogenic microorganisms.
2. To determine the antioxidant activities of *C. asiatica* extract using the free radical scavenging activity assay.
3. To determine the toxicity study of *C. asiatica* extract using the brine shrimp lethality assay (BSLA).
4. To determine the effectiveness of *C. asiatica* extract as a potential natural food additive on different types of FCFV.