RAPID CHROMATOGRAPHIC SEPARATION
OF FOOD ADDITIVES ON THIN LAYERS
OF AN INORGANIC ION-EXCHANGER

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SUMMARY

The chromatographic behaviour of ascorbic acid, benzoic acid, butylated hydroxyanisole, butylated hydroxytoluene, butyraldehyde, butyric acid, cinnamaldehyde, citric acid, ethyl acrylate, ethyl benzoate, ethyl p-hydroxybenzoate, fumaric acid, lactic acid, lauric acid, maleic acid, methyl p-hydroxybenzoate, oleic acid, p-hydroxybenzoic acid, propionic acid, propyl gallate, propyl p-hydroxybenzoate, salicylic acid, sodium benzoate, and sorbic acid has been studied on thin layers of stannic silicate ion-exchanger with several aqueous, organic, and mixed mobile phases. Rapid separations of one food additive from many other food additives, and ternary and binary separations, are reported.

INTRODUCTION

Food additives are widely used to preserve the quality of the food, to achieve the uniformity needed for large-scale production, to enhance the flavour, or to improve the texture of a food product [1]. To monitor the use of additives in food many methods, for example spectrophotometry, voltammetry, and high-performance liquid chromatography, have been used during last two decades [2]. Because different types of additive are used for different purposes in one type of food product [3,4] selective separation is required before their quantitative analysis. Use of new synthetic inorganic ion-exchangers as stationary phases in thin-layer chromatography has transformed this technique into a powerful separation tool in chemical analysis [5]. We report here interesting results obtained from a study of the chromatographic behaviour of 24 food additives on thin layers.
of a synthetic inorganic ion-exchanger, stannic silicate [6,7]. Rapid and selective methods have been developed for separation of one additive from the others. Binary and ternary separations of food additives have also been achieved.

**EXPERIMENTAL**

**Chemicals and Reagents**

All chemicals and reagents were of analytical grade from Merck, Fluka, and Riedel. The food additives used in this study were ascorbic acid (ASC), benzoic acid (BZA), butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), butyraldehyde (BUA), butyric acid (BUT), cinnamaldehyde (CIN), citric acid (CIA), ethyl acrylate (EAC), ethyl benzoate (EBE), ethyl p-hydroxybenzoate (EPHB), fumaric acid (FUM), lactic acid (LAC), lauric acid (LAU), maleic acid (MAL), methyl p-hydroxybenzoate (MPHB), oleic acid (OLE), p-hydroxybenzoic acid (PHBA), propionic acid (PRA), propyl gallate (PGA), propyl p-hydroxybenzoate (PPHB), salicylic acid (SAL), sodium benzoate (NBA), and sorbic acid (SOA).

Standard solutions (1 mg mL$^{-1}$) of the additives were prepared in ethanol. The solutions were protected from light and stored at 4°C.

**Preparation of Ion-Exchange Plates**

Aqueous solutions of stannic chloride (0.036 M) and sodium silicate (0.288 M with respect to Si) were mixed in the ratio 4:1 ($v/v$). The pH of the mixture was adjusted to 8.5 by addition of dilute aqueous ammonia solution and the mixture thoroughly stirred, during which a white gel was formed. The gel was left overnight then washed with demineralized water till the supernatant was free from ions. The supernatant was removed completely. A slurry, prepared by mixing 75 mL gel with 14 g silica gel G 60 powder, as binder, was used to coat seven 20 cm × 20 cm glass plates with a 300-μm layer, by use of a Camag automatic TLC coater. The plates were dried in an oven at 60–70°C for 2 h then stored at room temperature in a dessicator.

**Chromatography**

Sample solutions were applied to the plates as circular spots by means of disposable fine capillaries. The spots were dried completely and the plates were developed in ascending mode (without conditioning) in a Camag twin-trough chamber for 20 cm × 20 cm plates. The development
distance from the origin was 12.5 cm. After development the plates were
dried in a circulating air oven and the substances were detected by spraying
with an aqueous solution of 1% KMnO₄ + 5% Na₂CO₃ (1:1, v/v). This had
previously been found to be the most suitable detection reagent for the food
additives; yellow to brown spots were obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results listed in Tables I and II show that rapid and selective
separation of the food additives can be achieved on stannic silicate ion-
exchange plates. By using 1 M NH₄Br–acetone (3:7, v/v) as mobile phase
(Table I) oleic acid, butylated hydroxytoluene, sorbic acid, sodium benzo-
ate, and propyl gallate could be separated from many other additives in
one development. Many rapid ternary and binary separations of the food
additives were also achieved with simple aqueous systems as mobile pha-
ses (Table II). These separations are, in principle, based on selective ads-
orption of ionic and neutral species by the exchanger.

Table I
Separation of one food additive from others on thin layers of stannic silicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Separation (Rₜ–Rₖ)</th>
<th>Mobile phase</th>
<th>Interferences</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OLE (0.42–0.62) from 16 additives</td>
<td>1.0 M NH₄Br–acetone, 3:7 (v/v)</td>
<td>LAU, BHT, CIA</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAL (0.70–0.84) from 16 additives</td>
<td>Chloroform–methanol, 4:6 (v/v)</td>
<td>LAC, FUM, PGA</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASC (0.90–0.98) from 12 additives</td>
<td>NH₄Br 0.5 M</td>
<td>LAC, LAU, FUM, SOA, SAL, MAL, CIA</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHT (0.48–0.70) from 16 additives</td>
<td>1.0 M NH₄Br–acetone, 3:7 (v/v)</td>
<td>LAU, EBE, BHA</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOA (0.48–0.80) from 14 additives</td>
<td>1.0 M NH₄Br–NH₃, 3:7 (v/v)</td>
<td>FUM, CIN, EAC, PGA, SAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA (0.00–0.00) from 14 additives</td>
<td>1.0 M NH₄Br–acetone, 3:7 (v/v)</td>
<td>PRA, BUT, LAU, EAC, CIA</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGA (0.48–0.80) from 14 additives</td>
<td>1.0 M NH₄Br–NH₃, 3:7 (v/v)</td>
<td>FUM, CIN, EAC, SOA, SAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZA (0.24–0.41) from 13 additives</td>
<td>Chloroform (pure)</td>
<td>LAC, OLE, CIN, SOA, SAL, NBA</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA (0.00–0.00) from 13 additives</td>
<td>Chloroform (pure)</td>
<td>LAC, MAL, CIN, PGA, SAL, ASC, NBA</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rₜ = R₀ of rear of spot, Rₖ = R₀ of leading front of spot
Table II
Ternary and binary separations achieved on stannic silicate plates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile phase</th>
<th>Separation ((R_T-R_L))</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borate buffer (pH 9)</td>
<td>PPHB (0.45–0.65)–BZA (0.78–0.85)–PHBA (0.89–0.94)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EPHB (0.67–0.77)–NBA (0.80–0.84)–PHBA (0.89–0.94)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPHB (0.52–0.66)–SOA (0.70–0.78)–PHBA (0.87–0.92)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPHB (0.47–0.65)–MPHB (0.77–0.82)–PHBA (0.90–0.95)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAL (0.75–0.81)–PHBA (0.89–0.93)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPHB (0.54–0.67)–NBA (0.80–0.85)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCl (1 M)</td>
<td>SOA (0.43–0.56)–MPHB (0.67–0.73)–PHBA (0.83–0.89)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPHB (0.36–0.46)–BZA (0.59–0.66)–PHBA (0.81–0.87)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EPHB (0.51–0.60)–MPHB (0.65–0.70)–PHBA (0.82–0.90)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPHB (0.34–0.46)–SAL (0.60–0.74)–PHBA (0.81–0.87)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammonium sulphate, 1%</td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.41–0.76)–PRA (0.80–0.91)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.50–0.76)–BUT (0.80–0.91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.45–0.75)–LAC (0.79–0.90)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.42–0.76)–MAL (0.80–0.94)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.55–0.75)–OLE (0.79–0.90)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.54–0.77)–BUA (0.81–0.90)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.53–0.77)–EBE (0.81–0.91)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.57–0.78)–EAC (0.82–0.93)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.49–0.76)–ASC (0.80–0.93)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.57–0.76)–CIA (0.80–0.91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NaH₂PO₄–NaOH buffer (pH 8)</td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SAL (0.76–0.92)–PRA (0.96–1.00)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SAL (0.58–0.86)–BZA (0.92–0.98)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SAL (0.70–0.89)–FUM (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SAL (0.76–0.91)–BUT (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.63–0.86)–LAC (0.92–0.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.73–0.91)–MAL (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.58–0.84)–FUM (0.94–0.97)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–SAL (0.76–0.90)–LAU (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.58–0.76)–MAL (0.82–0.97)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.64–0.81)–LAU (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.62–0.77)–ASC (0.88–0.96)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–SAL (0.76–0.92)–BUT (0.95–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acetone–water, 4:6 (v/v)</td>
<td>CIA (0.00–0.40)–BUA (0.81–0.88)–EAC (0.96–1.00)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–BUA (0.79–0.89)–EBE (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–BUA (0.78–0.87)–EAC (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–BUA (0.78–0.91)–SAL (0.96–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–BUA (0.78–0.85)–EAC (0.96–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CIA (0.00–0.44)–BUA (0.84–0.88)–EBE (0.96–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHT (0.00–0.00)–BUA (0.84–0.87)–EAC (0.96–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BHA (0.00–0.00)–BUA (0.79–0.91)–EAC (0.96–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Table II (continued)**

Ternary and binary separations achieved on stannic silicate plates

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Mobile phase</th>
<th>Separation ((R_T - R_L)^*)</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chloroform (pure)</td>
<td>MAL (0.00–0.05)–OLE (0.44–0.61)–PRA (0.96–1.00)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CIA (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.13–0.28)–FUM (0.93–0.97)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PGA (0.00–0.06)–OLE (0.38–0.52)–EBE (0.95–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASC (0.00–0.00)–BZA (0.64–0.68)–BUA (0.95–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAL (0.00–0.05)–OLE (0.42–0.54)–BUT (0.97–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASC (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.21–0.36)–LAU (0.93–0.97)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CIA (0.00–0.00)–OLE (0.34–0.48)–FUM (0.94–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PGA (0.00–0.07)–SOA (0.21–0.40)–BUT (0.93–0.97)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAL (0.00–0.05)–OLE (0.42–0.56)–BHT (0.97–1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASC (0.00–0.00)–SOA (0.17–0.30)–PRA (0.91–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASC (0.00–0.00)–OLE (0.42–0.56)–EAC (0.95–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAL (0.00–0.07)–SOA (0.18–0.31)–PRA (0.93–0.97)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASC (0.00–0.00)–OLE (0.42–0.58)–LAU (0.94–1.00)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PGA (0.00–0.08)–BZA (0.48–0.50)–BUA (0.93–0.97)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^*_{R_T = R_F}\) of rear of spot, \(^*_{R_L = R_F}\) of leading front of spot

Chromatography of the food additives with chloroform, chloroform–methanol, and chloroform–acetone mobile phases resulted in widely different \(R_F\) values (Figs 1 and 2), indicating the possibility of novel separations with non-aqueous mobile phases also.

**Fig. 1**

\(R_F\) values of the food additives developed with chloroform (squares) and with chloroform–acetone, 1:1 (v/v) (triangles)
Fig. 2
Dependence of the $R_f$ values of the food additives on the amount (%) of methanol in methanol–chloroform mobile phases
REFERENCES