

Title Minimal processing of cactus pear and tender cactus cladodes
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Abstract

In Mexico, minimal processing of cactus pear and tender cactus pads (nopalitos) is a common, but technically undeveloped, practice. Minimal processing is important and has a great potential because it offers the opportunity to differentiate and add value to cactus pears and nopalitos, as long as nutritive and sensorial quality and safety are guaranteed. In this paper, the most important technical and scientific aspects of minimal processing in general are discussed, and the advances of the research conducted at the University of Chapingo on fresh cut cactus pears and nopalitos are presented. The shelf life of fresh cut cactus pears (peeled intact or in halves), packed in bi-directional polypropylene bags 25 μm thick, sealed and stored at 4°C, can be extended up to 20 days without affecting their quality. Also in nopalitos, the lowest ethanol production, smallest change in color and firmness were obtained at 4°C with sealed 25 μm -thick polypropylene bags.