

Cultivation, harvest and postharvest aspects that influence quality and organoleptic properties of hazelnut production and related final products

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Abstract

Current knowledge about hazelnut properties, microbiological and chemical changes during postharvest treatments and processing, are reviewed. Microbial activities become significant in quality loss due to inadequate harvest and postharvest practices. Aflatoxins, the secondary metabolites produced by toxigenic strains of *Aspergillus flavus*, are known to be involved in some toxic and carcinogenic diseases in human beings and animals. A number of physical and chemical factors affects the aflatoxin formation, among which the most important ones are environmental conditions, especially temperature and moisture. As well as environmental conditions, harvest and postharvest handling are strictly correlated to the microbial activity consequently, harvest, postharvest, processing conditions must be improved in order to minimize or avoid aflatoxin contamination. Good manufacturing practices, including storage conditions, are firmly associated to quality and organoleptic aspects and are the most important factors to guarantee good quality in the final product.