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Okruglica and Valjevka as cultivars appealing for plum brandy production**

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(TR 31093).

**Original scientific paper; the studies were subsidized by Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia (Project TR 31093).

SUMMARY

The paper presents the results of the gas-chromatography analysis of the major volatile components of plum brandies produced using traditional methods from fruits of Okruglica and Valjevka cultivars: methanol, 8 higher alcohols, 3 fatty acids, 10 esters and 2 aldehydes. The sensory appraisal of the produced plum brandies was conducted using the Buxbaum method.

- Based on the obtained results it can be concluded that while the plum brandies produced from both cultivars satisfy the requirements of the EU regulations

(related to the methanol content and content of total volatile components), they also differ in the content of certain tested components, thereby featuring different sensory qualities which contribute to their appeal for production of brandies with distinctive cultivar and region-typical characteristics.

Key words: plum, cultivars, plum brandies, volatile components, sensory characteristics

INTRODUCTION

In addition to cultivars that are widely present in plum orchards throughout Serbia (Požega a, Crvena ranka, Stanley, a anaska rodna, a anaska lepotica) and constitute the standard raw material for brandy production, there is also a number of cultivars with a limited local production and a smaller share in the overall assortment being used for the production of plum brandy as well. One of these cultivars is the indigenous Okruglica cultivar (also known as Draga ica, Ranka, Rancov, Metlaš), which is traditionally grown only in the area around a ak and is solely used for processing into brandy. It is tolerant to the plum sharka virus and produces small fruits (around 16 g). With the mesocarp firmly attached to the stone, it is processed into high-quality brandy (Miši , 1996; Niki evi and Teševi , 2010).

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 (30 g) ,
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 (Miši , 1996; Niki evi and Teševi , 2010).

(crossing Agen 707 and Stanley cultivars), which in the few areas where it is grown – almost exclusively in the a ak and Valjevo regions – is mostly used for drying and processing into brandy. The cultivar is tolerant to the sharka virus. With a medium large fruit (around 30 g) and mesocarp which is easily detached from the stone, it is processed into high-quality brandy (Miši , 1996; Niki evi and Teševi , 2010).

Although brandy producers in the region of a ak possess certain experiences in the processing of these two plum cultivars, no precise characterisation of the obtained monovarietal brandies has been conducted. Therefore the purpose of this paper was examine the content of the more significant volatile components and the sensory quality of the brandies obtained from the Okruglica and Valjevka cultivars using traditional methods which imply processing whole fruits with stones, spontaneous alcoholic fermentation and double distillation in traditional copper pot still (alembic).

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MATERIAL AND METHODS

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- Fruits of the plum cultivars under consideration were taken from commercial orchards on the slopes of the Jelica mountain near a ak. The fruits were harvested at full ripeness, i.e. on 31st July (Okruglica) and 25th August

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| <p>("),</p> | <p>(Valjevka), featuring typical cultivar-specific characteristics.</p> |
| <p>16.2 g,</p> | <p>Okruglica had a fruit mass of 16.2 g, with stone-fruit ratio amounting to 8.22% and with dry solubles content of 19.2%; Valjevka had the fruit mass of 29.8 g, the stone-fruit ratio of 4.66% and the content of dry soluble matter amounting to 20.9%.</p> |
| <p>8.22%</p> | <p></p> |
| <p>"</p> | <p>19.2%;</p> |
| <p>29.8 g,</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>4.66%,</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>20.9%.</p> | <p>- Polyethylene vessels were filled with 180kg of whole plum fruits (in 2 replications for each cultivar).</p> |
| <p>180 kg</p> | <p>- Spontaneous alcoholic fermentation of the plums was conducted in closed vessels, using epiphytic microflora, at the temperature of 25±3 °C.</p> |
| <p>(2</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>).)</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>,</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>25±3 °C.</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>(" "</p> | <p>10 The alcoholic fermentation lasted for 10 days (in Okruglica cultivar, the final content of the dry soluble matter in the fruit mashes was 9.0%), i.e. 25 days (in Valjevka cultivar, the final content of the dry soluble matter in the fruit mashes was 11.7%). Distillation of the fermented mashes, was performed in traditional alembic (capacity 100 l) immediately after fermentation, produced raw soft brandies, with ethanol content in the range between 22 and 25 vol%.</p> |
| <p>9.0%) 25</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>("</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>11.7%).</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>100 l)</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>22</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>25 vol%.</p> | <p>-</p> |
| <p>:</p> | <p>Redistillation of raw soft brandies from both cultivars was performed using the same distillation apparatus and with separation of the fractions: 1% of the head, middle fraction (with 55-56 vol% of ethanol) and tail. Only the middle</p> |
| <p>vol%</p> | <p></p> |

fraction was used for further analysis.

Gas chromatography methods for quantitative determination of light volatile components (methanol, 1-propanol, 1-butanol, 2-butanol, 2-methyl-1-propanol, 2-methyl-1-butanol, 3-methyl-1-butanol, ethyl acetate, isoamyl acetate, ethyl butanoate, ethyl hexanoate, ethyl octanoate, acetaldehyde and benzaldehyde) and heavy volatile components (2-phenylethanol, 1-hexanol, hexanoic acid, octanoic acid, decanoic acid, ethyl decanoate, ethyl dodecanoate, ethyl tetradecanoate, diethyl succinate and ethyl lactate) in samples of plum brandies were described in our previous paper (Popovi et al., 2009).

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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12000 mg/l a.a.

Table 1 shows the results of gas-chromatographic analysis of the plum brandies obtained from the Okruglica and Valjevka cultivars. Considering that the distillation of the fermented fruit mashes were performed immediately upon completed fermentation, both brandies comply with the EU legislation stipulating that the methanol content in brandies must not exceed 12000 mg/l a.a.

(Paunovi , 1991)

12000 mg/l a.a.

(Stojanovska, 1982),

(

(5644 mg/l a.a – " , 5829 mg/l a.a. – ")

2000 mg/l a.a.).

- Regardless of the fact that various authors (Paunovi , 1991) obtained contradictory results regarding the impact made by length of duration of alcoholic fermentation on the methanol content in the brandy, it may be assumed that the longer alcoholic fermentation of the Valjevka cultivar plum fruits compared to fruits of the Okruglica cultivar resulted in the higher content of this adverse component in the brandy.
- Therefore, it cannot be inferred whether a higher methanol content in the brandy can be treated as a cultivar-specific trait of the Valjevka cultivar, compared to Okruglica.
- This assumption is further supported by the findings that brandies produced from Okruglica in a traditional way, using fruit mashes which were not distilled immediately upon fermentation, but sometimes several months following its completion, were sometimes characterised by the methanol content in excess of 12000 mg/l a.a. (Stojanovska, 1982), with a potential adverse safety effect upon the brandy.
- The content of total volatile components (excluding methanol) in both of the examined brandies (5644 mg/l a.a – Okruglica, 5829 mg/l a.a. – Valjevka) complies with the EU requirements (min 2000 mg/l a.a.).

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(mg/l a.a.)

Table 1. Gas chromatographic analysis of the most important volatile components of plum brandies obtained from Okruglica and Valjevka plum cultivars (mg/l a.a.)

| Volatile component | | Okruglica | Valjevka |
|--------------------|--|-----------|----------|
| | /Methanol | 5100 | 7433 |
| 1- | /1-propanol | 834 | 1592 |
| 1- | /1-butanol | 24 | 25 |
| 2- | /2-butanol | 15 | 98 |
| 2- | -1- /2-methyl-1-propanol | 935 | 310 |
| 2- | -1- /2-methyl-1-butanol | 630 | 211 |
| 3- | -1- /3-methyl-1-butanol | 2455 | 825 |
| 1- | /1-hexanol | 22 | 31 |
| 2- | /2-phenylethanol | 59 | 22 |
| | ()/Higher alcohols (Total) | 4974 | 3114 |
| | /Ethyl acetate | 157 | 1256 |
| | /Ethyl butyrate | 1 | 1 |
| | /Ethyl hexanoate | 1 | 3 |
| | /Ethyl octanoate | 4 | 11 |
| | /Ethyl decanoate | 5 | 12 |
| | /Ethyl dodecanoate | 4 | 3 |
| | /Ethyl tetradecanoate | 2 | 1 |
| | /Ethyl lactate | 299 | 1082 |
| | /Isoamyl acetate | 2 | 2 |
| | /Diethyl succinate | 7 | 3 |
| | ()/Esters (Total) | 482 | 2374 |
| | (- -) | 26 | 36 |
| | Esters (Total – Ethyl acetate – Ethyl lactate) | | |
| | /Hexanoic acid | 8 | 12 |
| | /Octanoic acid | 24 | 36 |
| | /Decanoic acid | 26 | 60 |
| | ()/Acids (Total) | 58 | 108 |
| | /Acetaldehyde | 94 | 204 |
| | /Benzaldehyde | 36 | 29 |
| | (-) | 5644 | 5829 |
| | Volatile components (Total – Methanol) | | |

- It is interesting to observe that the characteristics of fruits belonging to the plum cultivars under consideration make a significant impact on alcoholic fermentation in the conditions of the traditional spontaneous

fermentation of whole fruits.

- Upon reaching the full ripeness stage, fruits of the Okruglica cultivar are markedly juicy and owing to their thin skin, easily release the juice, enabling a fast onset of alcoholic fermentation, rapid establishment of ellipsoid yeasts dominance in the fruit mash, as well as fast completion of fermentation (the overall duration of fermentation being 10 days).

- On the other hand, fruits of the Valjevka cultivar grown in the a ak region are typically quite dry upon reaching full ripeness, lacking juiciness and with a relatively thick and tough skin, preventing the release of the juice from the fruits and slowing down the onset of alcoholic fermentation, as well as the establishment of the ellipsoid yeasts dominance, ultimately resulting in the fermentation (which lasted 25 days) being dominated by prolonged and more intense activity of microorganisms (apiculate yeasts, acetic acid bacteria and lactic acid bacteria) with a potential adverse impact on the brandy quality. It was due to these characteristics of the fruits of the Valjevka cultivar that caused an increase in the components of the brandy that may be an indicator of the presence of undesired microorganisms in the indigenous microflora at

91%), 2- (700%),
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- spontaneous fermentation. In other words, the brandy made from the Valjevka cultivar contained more 1-propanol (by 91%), 2-butanol (by 553%), ethyl acetate (by 700%), ethyl lactate (by 262%), decanoic acid (by 131%) and acetaldehyde (by 117%), compared to the brandy made from the Okruglica cultivar. Apart from this and considering the fact that the distillation of the fermented fruit mash was performed immediately upon completion of fermentation, the contents of these components in the brandy made from the Valjevka cultivar remain at a considerably lower level than the ones which Scholten and Kacprowski (1995) state as boundary levels for occurrence of adverse sensory characteristics, i.e. occurrence of impure and untypical brandy odour. In other words, presence of certain previously stated components in concentrations observed in the brandy from the Valjevka cultivar, make a favourable impact on the brandy odour and aroma: while 1-propanol gives the distillate the flowery odour, ethyl acetate contributes to the odour's fruity tonus and ethyl lactate gives it the nice and enjoyable odour of high-quality fruit brandies.

- Considering the fact that the traditional spontaneous fermentation of the Okruglica cultivar takes place in the warmest

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| <p>() , - (28 °C) (Moreno et al., 1988). , " mg/l a.a 2- -1- 3- 1-), " " , Scholten Kacprowski (1995) , 5620 mg/l a.a. - , 2- " " " Moreno et al. (1988) , .</p> | <p>- part of the year (first half of - August), the turbulent fermentation - at somewhat higher temperatures (around 28 °C) may result in increased amounts of isomyl alcohols (Moreno et al., 1988). - Consequently, the brandy made from the Okruglica cultivar was found to contain 3085 mg/l a.a. of isomyl alcohols (sum of 2-methyl- 1-butanol and 3-methyl-1-butanol), which is by 198% more compared to the brandy obtained from the Valjevka cultivar. This high a concentration of isomyl alcohols may have an adverse effect on the sensory quality of the brandy, in the form of a heavy tail over-tone. a Scholten and Kacprowski (1995) - established this type of - shortcoming in brandies containing - concentrations of isomyl alcohols in the range between 3000 and 5620 mg/l a.a. A higher content of total higher alcohols, 2-feniletanola and diethyl-succinate in the brandy from the Okruglica cultivar, compared to the Valjevka-cultivar brandy can also be attributed to a - somewhat higher temperature of - the fruit mash at alcoholic fermentation, since according to Moreno et al. (1988) these components are under a - pronounced impact of the - fermenting fruit mash temperature. - - However, the impact made by these factors on the brandy quality may vary. While on the one side 2- phenylethanol possesses a</p> |
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| <p>2- a.a.</p> | <p>- pleasant rose odour and diethyl succinate gives a fresh and fruity enjoyable smell, a total content of high alcohols in excess of 4000 mg/l a.a. may conceal the fineness of the distillate aroma.</p> |
| <p>4974 mg/l a.a.</p> | <p>This occurs due to their assertive aroma, and is the case with the brandy from the Okruglica plum cultivar, which contains 4974 mg/l a.a. of the total higher alcohols.</p> |
| <p>Popovi et al. (2009)</p> | <p>Both brandies were found to contain the same values of isoamyl acetate, possessing a specific banana smell. According to the content of fatty acids and their ethyl esters, it can be observed that brandies made from the Okruglica and Valjevka cultivars are more similar to the brandies obtained from cultivars which, according to Popovi et al. (2009) are characterised by a fruity plum brandy aroma (Požega a and a anska rodna), then brandies made from cultivars with a pronounced flowery character (a anska leptotica and a anska najbolja).</p> |
| <p>The content of benzaldehyde was slightly higher in the brandy from the Okruglica plum cultivar compared to the brandy obtained from the Valjevka cultivar, despite the considerably shorter fermentation time compared to that of the Valjevka fruit mash. This may be an indication of a higher content of cyanogenic glycosides in the fruits of the</p> | <p>The content of benzaldehyde was slightly higher in the brandy from the Okruglica plum cultivar compared to the brandy obtained from the Valjevka cultivar, despite the considerably shorter fermentation time compared to that of the Valjevka fruit mash. This may be an indication of a higher content of cyanogenic glycosides in the fruits of the</p> |

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Okruglica cultivar, i.e. its fruit stones, which also have a more porous shell. Both cultivars' brandies were distilled immediately upon the completion of fermentation, therefore having the benzaldehyde content lower than 100 mg/l a.a., which according to older Serbian legislation represented a borderline concentration above which the odour of a brandy becomes dominated by the smell of the stone.

Ratios of certain higher alcohols (Table 2) can be used in more detailed characterisation of certain monovarietal plum brandies, i.e. in defining certain conditions during the technological process of their production. This is especially true of the ratios involving isoamyl alcohols as one of the components, i.e. 2-methyl-1-propanol on one side and 1-propanol on the other side, as previously noted.

According to Satora and Tuszynski (2008), the ratio isoamyl alcohols/1-propanol lower than or close to 1 is an indicator of a markedly spontaneous fermentation, which was established in the case of Valjevka. The same authors state that when this ratio is higher than 1, it becomes an indicator of a fermentation conducted using a yeast monoculture. In the case of Okruglica, this ratio exceeds 1, due to the fact that despite the spontaneous fermentation, the

Saccharomyces cerevisiae yeast in the fruit mash. A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the ratio 2-methyl-1-propanol/1-propanol. In addition to this, the sensory characterisation of the brandy can make use of the ratio between 2-phenylethanol (characterised by specific rose odour) and 1-hexanol (characterised by fresh and pleasant odour of green part of plants). The values of this ratio show large differences (2.68 for Okruglica, compared to 0.71 for Valjevka), resulting in the different characteristics of the cultivar-specific aromas of the two plum brandies.

specific characteristics of the fruit enabled a rapid establishment of the domination of the *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* yeast in the fruit mash. A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the ratio 2-methyl-1-propanol/1-propanol. In addition to this, the sensory characterisation of the brandy can make use of the ratio between 2-phenylethanol (characterised by specific rose odour) and 1-hexanol (characterised by fresh and pleasant odour of green part of plants). The values of this ratio show large differences (2.68 for Okruglica, compared to 0.71 for Valjevka), resulting in the different characteristics of the cultivar-specific aromas of the two plum brandies.

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Table 2. Ratios of higher alcohols in plum brandies obtained from Okruglica and Valjevka plum cultivars

| /Ratio | /Okruglica | /Valjevka |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| 3-methyl-1-butanol/2-methyl-1-butanol | 3,90 | 3,91 |
| Isoamyl alcohols/2-methyl-1-propanol | 3,30 | 3,34 |
| Isoamyl alcohols/1-propanol | 3,69 | 0,65 |
| 2-methyl-1-propanol/1-propanol | 1,12 | 0,19 |
| 2-phenylethanol/1-hexanol | 2,68 | 0,71 |

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It is evident from Table 3 that the brandy obtained from the Valjevka cultivar received a higher sensory grade than the brandy made from the Okruglica cultivar, while the values of the grades correspond to our earlier research

(Popovi et al., 2012, 2015). It ought to be noted that brandy made from the Okruglica cultivar produces highest-quality distillates, through blending with brandies produced from other indigenous Serbian plum cultivars.

These distillates are awarded high sensory grades – above 18.01 (Popovi et al., 2015) – even before maturing in oak barrels. This corresponds to the high-quality brandies which are awarded gold medals at official assessments of sensory quality of brandies. Our unpublished information based on practical experiences indicate that after a prolonged period of maturation in oak barrels, both monovarietal brandies – Okruglica and Valjevka– can attain the level of the highest-quality brandies.

3. (45
 vol%)
Table 3. Sensory analyses of plum brandies (ethanol content 45 vol%) produced from Okruglica and Valjevka plum cultivars

| /Characteristics | /Okruglica | /Valjevka |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|
| /Colour (max 2 pts) | 2,00 | 2,00 |
| /Clearness (max 1 pts) | 1,00 | 1,00 |
| /Odour (max 7 pts) | 5,95 | 6,15 |
| /Taste (max 10 pts) | 8,50 | 8,48 |
| /Total (max 20 pts) | 17,45 | 17,63 |

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the obtained results, it can be inferred that if fruits of traditional plum cultivars Okruglica and Valjevka are subjected to traditional method of

- processing implying spontaneous alcoholic fermentation of whole plum fruits and double distillation, it is possible to obtain high quality brandies.
- Differences in their chemical composition and sensory characteristics were in this method of processing conditioned exclusively by the characteristics of the fruits of the two cultivars, and most probably by the ensuing differences in the composition of the indigenous microflora causing the alcoholic fermentation. Considering the quality and the specific sensory characteristics of the obtained distillates, these two plums cultivars which at the moment occupy a minor proportion in the Serbian plum assortment, ought to be spread to suitable regions, as cultivars intended for production of high-quality brandies.

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