Development of a Fruit Leather by Using Underutilized Bael *(Aegle marmelos* L.) Fruit

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Fruit leather, a dehydrated snack, has the potential to increase fruit solids consumption especially in the young. When consider about underutilized fruits, bael fruit is one of them which is highly nutritious, medically important and seasonably available fruit in Sri Lanka. A product developed through such a valuable fruit will give a great potential to be popularized among the health concerned consumers in the present world. Hence, the study was carried out to develop bael fruit *(Aegle marmelos* L.) pulp based leather using sugar, citric acid and a thickening agent as ingredients, with the aim of improving the palatability and increasing the utilization of bael fruit. The proximate composition of the final product was analyzed. The product was evaluated for quality by using its microbial, physicochemical and sensory properties. Data of sensory evaluations were statistically analyzed using Friedman non parametric test and the shelf life evaluation data were analyzed using by using one way ANOVA test with 95% confidence level. The results were revealed that the best thickening agent was corn flour and its best concentration was 2.5%. Proximate analysis of the fruit leather showed that the finally developed product contained 2% ash, 2.3% crude protein, 0.1% fat, 3.9% fiber and 8.9% moisture. According to the results the developed bael fruit leather packed in low density polypropylene (gauge 300) can be safely stored under room temperature for six weeks.

Keywords: Bael fruit, Fruit leather, Sensory evaluation, Shelf life