EFFECT OF EDIBLE COATING ON ORGANOLEPTIC AND FUNCTIONAL QUALITY OF MINIMALLY PROCESSED PRICKLY PEAR (*Opuntia* sp)

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Prickly-Pear (*Opuntia* sp) is an excellent alternative because of its high content of antioxidants, fiber and other bioactive compounds, which give a special quality as functional food. There is a difficulty in the process of peeling fruit makes this unattractive to the consumer who is not known how to avoid contact with the many thorns that has in its shell. This work was focused on the study of the incidence of edible film on organoleptical and functional quality of sliced Prickly-Pear (*Opuntia* sp) minimally processed. Fruits were selected, manually peeled, washed and disinfected, being cut into cross sections, which are three lots, one of them was left uncoated, while the remaining two coated with an edible film (a:gelatin(20%)/starch(2%)/cactus mucilage(10%), b:gelatin(20%)/starch(2%)/cactus mucilage(20%). These lots were stored in plastic trays covered with PVC film at 4±1°C and 75±2% RH for 14 days, periodically assessing flesh color, texture, respiratory rate, acidity, pH, soluble solids, vitamin C, total phenolics, total carotenoids and antioxidant activity through TEAC method. There was a reduction of respiratory rate in fruits coated, without significant differences in the physicochemical parameters analyzed throughout storage between them. At 11 days, control fruit showed more browning, loss of firmness and ascorbic acid than those coated, as a function of the mucilage percent incorporated in film. The results suggest that the coating prolong the preservation of minimally processed prickly pear with commercial quality up to 11 days.

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