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# Process-induced toxicants in food: an overview on structures, formation pathways, sensory properties, safety and health implications

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# **Abstract**

With the rapid advances in ready-to-eat food products and the progress of food processing industries, concerns about food security and investigating food safety as well as sensory quality have intensified. Many food safety concerns are attributed to the toxic components, which can be produced during food processing as process-induced toxicants (PITs). The thermal processing of food (e.g., baking, cooking, grilling, roasting, and toasting) may lead to the formation of some highly hazardous PITs for humans and animals. These include acrolein, acrylamide, benzene, ethyl carbamate, chlorinated compounds, heterocyclic organic compounds (HOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), heterocyclic aromatic amines (HAAs), biogenic amines (BAs), *N*-nitrosamines, Maillard reaction prod‑ ucts (MRPs), and several newly identifed toxicants such as 3-monochloropropane-1,2-diol. The occurrence of these contaminants is often accompanied by distinguishing odor, taste, and color. The severity of the sensory attributes can vary depending on the compound concentration. Knowledge about the biochemical and chemical mechanisms of PITs generation is necessary for expanding feasible approaches to limit and control their amounts in food products. This contribution introduces the most signifcant PITs, highlighting their formation mechanisms, impact on sensory characteristics of foods, analytical methods to detection, risk assessments, and food safety/adverse health efects of ultra-processed foods.

**Keywords** Food, Ultra-processed food, Thermal processing, Flavors, Sensory properties, Food safety

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# **Introduction**

Several factors may lead to chemical or microbial contamination of a complicated food web (Li et al., [2020a](#page-39-0)). Unlike microbial toxins leading to an instant detriment, chemical contaminants are commonly "silent" killers, which may afect health after long-term and repeated exposure to minute amounts of these compounds (Yu et al., [2014\)](#page-43-0). Potential safety- and security-related chemical contaminants can be classifed as natural toxicants, environmental contaminants, processing-aid chemical compounds, agrochemical residues, packaging migrants, and process-induced toxicants (PITs). PITs refer to the materials generated during food processing that have adverse physiological (toxicological) impacts on consumers (Stadler et al., [2008\)](#page-42-0).

Generally, food processes are carried out to modify the physicochemical and sensory attributes of the raw materials and improve the quality, nutritional value, favor, palatability, and shelf life of food. However, they may generate potentially toxic components, resulting in adverse efects on the quality and safety of food (Li et al., [2020a;](#page-39-0) Rafee et al., [2022](#page-41-0); Yarahmadi et al., [2016\)](#page-43-1).

Heating is regarded as the oldest and most trustworthy industrial and domestic food processing method (Li et al., [2020a;](#page-39-0) Nerin et al., [2016\)](#page-40-0). Heat processing has always been utilized to transform raw materials and crude substances into edible food (Stadler et al., [2008\)](#page-42-0). Due to the formation of several undesirable food contaminants during heat processing, such as Maillard reaction products (MRPs), and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), among others, it is imperative to pay full attention to potential harmful efects of over-processing. Modifying the heating method and monitoring the temperature may efficiently diminish the production of undesirable sub-stances (Li et al., [2020a](#page-39-0); Nerin et al., [2016\)](#page-40-0). This review intends to shed light on the formation mechanisms of several food PITs and their impact on food safety and sensory characteristics.

# **Types and occurrence of food PITs**

Several factors, such as pre- or post-harvest handling, food composition and formulation, as well as processing and storage conditions, may afect the PITs profle and their level in the fnal food product. Most food products have complex formulations. The main PITs produced in food matrices are acrolein, acrylamide, heterocyclic organic compounds (such as pyridine, pyrrole, furan, and thiophene), ethyl carbamate, chlorinated compounds (such as chlorine dioxide, sodium chlorite, 3- and 2-monochloropropane-1,2-diol, etc.), pyrolysis products from amino acids and proteins (heterocyclic aromatic amines, and biogenic amines), benzene, *N*-nitrosamines, PAH, and MRPs (Fig. [1](#page-2-0)). The Maillard reaction is the most signifcant one in many processed food leading to the formation of various contaminants, some of which can have toxic efects (Stadler et al., [2008](#page-42-0)). However, at a very low concentration, MRPs impart desirable favor to food such as those of bread crust. Due to the health efects of PITs, in this section, the main ones are discussed in terms of the formation process and the dominant food matrix.

# **Acrolein**

Acrolein (the most simple unsaturated aldehyde) is an irritating and off-flavor compound formed upon heating of vegetable oils (e.g., sunfower, perilla, rapeseed/canola, rice bran, and soybean oils) during frying and processing of lipid-rich foods containing vegetable oils (e.g., peanut oil and corn oil) (Endo et al., [2013;](#page-36-0) Seyed Mohammadi Fard et al., [2020\)](#page-41-1). Acrolein was frst recognized as a volatile favor chemical produced in the pyrolysis of animal fats and various processed food products. The principal food sources of acrolein are thermally-processed lipids, which consist substantially of triacylglycerols of diverse fatty acids. However, it may be produced from miscellaneous polyamines and amino acids under the usual physicochemical conditions experienced during food processing (Hikisz et al., [2023;](#page-37-0) Jiang et al., [2022](#page-38-0); Stevens et al., [2008\)](#page-42-1). It has been reported that acrolein is produced by the breakdown of amino acids, like methionine, cystathionine, homocysteine, and homoserine, by subjecting them to heating at a temperature of 100 °C under neutral pH conditions. The deamination and



<span id="page-2-0"></span>**Fig. 1** Schematic of some important process-induced food toxicants

decarboxylation of these amino acids produce methional (3-substituted propanal derived from methionine), which can readily be decomposed to yield acrolein. Additionally, acrolein can be produced through the oxidative breakdown of various fatty acids found in triacylglycerols. The acrolein formation via a free radical mechanism involves homolytic cleavage of R−O bonds, presumably at elevated temperatures through glycerol dehydration (Mehta, [2015\)](#page-39-1).

# **Acrylamide**

Acrylamide is found primarily in plant-based foods and many cooked (above 120 °C / 248 °F) starchy foods such as potatoes, cereal, and bakery products (Krishnakumar et al., [2014\)](#page-38-1). It is known that the acrylamide content in fried and roasted potatoes will be enhanced by increasing the carbohydrate quantity in the product. The mechanism of acrylamide formation depends on the nature of carbonyl compounds and the processing conditions (pH, water content, and temperature). Acrylamide may be formed from lactic acid via dehydration and decarboxylation, amino acids, carbohydrates/sugars, lipidsor amino acids-derived compounds like acrylic acid or acrolein. Several researchers have indicated that the Maillard reaction is the primary pathway for acrylamide generation during the thermal treatment of foods containing asparagine and carbonyl compounds (Lea et al., [2007](#page-38-2); Peivasteh-Roudsari et al., [2022](#page-40-1)). Another route that may be the main pathway of acrylamide production

<span id="page-3-0"></span>**Table 1** Some important heterocyclic organic compounds

is the reaction of acrylic acid and ammonia at 180 °C. In this case, acrolein is oxidized to acrylic acid, which then reacts with ammonia released from an amino acid to form acrylamide at high temperatures. Ammonia is formed from an amino acid upon Strecker degradation in the presence of a carbonyl compound. The other minor route of acrylamide formation is the high-temperature treatment of acrolein which is readily formed from glycerol produced from lipid acylglycerols (Yasuhara et al., [2003](#page-43-2)). Moreover, the pyrolysis of carnosine (beta-alanyl-L-histidine) was found to be responsible for acrylamide generation in some baking processes (Claus et al., [2006](#page-36-1)).

# **Heterocyclic organic compounds (HOCs)**

Heterocyclic organic compounds are cyclic compounds with ring structures containing carbon and other elements such as oxygen, sulfur, and nitrogen. These components are primarily formed through non-enzymatic browning reactions in foods. Classifcation of HOCs by ring size is convenient because the rings of a specifed size have similar features. For example, three- and fourmembered rings are geometrically strained and can readily be opened and reformed, thus serving as well-known reactive intermediates. Five- and six-membered rings, whose sizes allow the development of aromatic character, are stable and readily formed. Seven-membered rings and larger are highly stable but less readily constructed and relatively less well-investigated (Katritzky et al., [2010](#page-38-3)). Several important HOCs are listed in Table [1](#page-3-0).



Heterocyclic derivatives can be divided into two broad areas: aromatic compounds like furan and non-aromatics such as tetrahydrofuran, piperidine, and dihydrofuran-2,5-dione (Alvarez‐Builla et al., [2012\)](#page-35-0). Many of these compounds can be produced over high thermal interactions of amino acids and reducing sugars. The impacts of lipids on the generation of HOCs in a model Maillard reaction have recently been established (Wang et al., [2022b\)](#page-43-3). These compounds may also be formed through enzymatic reactions in fruits and during cheese ripening (Marcinkowska et al., [2022](#page-39-2); Senoussi et al., [2022](#page-41-2)). Furan formation has been reported in various heat-treated foods such as baked bread, coffee, cooked chicken, and canned meat (Vranova et al., [2009](#page-42-2)). Pyrrole and pyrrole derivatives have also been identifed in some food systems. Pyrrole can be formed from pyrrolidine by catalytic dehydrogenation (Yao et al., [2014\)](#page-43-4). Pyrrole derivatives are often produced via the condensation of amines with carbonyl‐containing compounds (Anderson et al., [2000](#page-35-1)). Many pyrrole derivatives have been isolated from foods whose flavors had been improved or impaired by nonenzymatic browning (Shuyun et al., [2022\)](#page-42-3). Naturally occurring pyrazines have been separated from numerous complex food systems that have not undergone heat treatment, demonstrating the existence of various biological pathways for pyrazine formation (Mortzfeld et al., [2020](#page-40-2)).

Although the efects of lipids on the production of volatile heterocyclic compounds have not been fully investigated, remarkable diferences are observed in cooked meat aroma via the removal of the phospholipids and triacylglycerols. These changes were attributed to a reduction in the concentrations of the aldehydes and aliphatic alcohols and a considerable increase in the amounts of the heterocyclic compounds, particularly alkylpyrazines such as 2,5- and 2,6-dimethylpyrazine, 2-methyl-3 (or 6)-pentylpyrazine and 2-methyl-3 (or 6)-hexylpyrazine (Shahidi et al.,  $2022$ ; Whitfield et al.,  $1988$ ). The last compounds have a long alkyl-chain substitute on the pyrazine ring. Pyridine and its derivatives can also be found in some processed foods. For example, 2-alkylpyridines were suggested to produce the corresponding unsaturated aldehydes by thermal processing in the presence of ammonia (Zamora et al., [2020](#page-43-6)). It has been reported that furan can be generated from multiple sources, including a) carbohydrates (the primary sources of furan in food) via thermal degradation, or Maillard reaction of reducing sugars, alone or in the presence of amino acids, b) certain amino acids, e.g., alanine and cysteine/cystine under thermal degradation or oxidation, c) vitamins such as ascorbic acid, dehydroascorbic acid, and thiamine, d) polyunsaturated fatty acids, and e) carotenoids (Becalski et al., [2005](#page-35-2); Yaylayan, [2006\)](#page-43-7).

# **Ethyl carbamate (EC)**

EC, also known as urethane, is the ethyl ester of carbamic acid ( $NH<sub>2</sub>COOH$ ) that can be found in various fermented and baked food products as well as other food and beverages like cheese, yogurt, soy sauce, bread, and wine, among others (Li et al., [2017](#page-39-3); Weber et al., [2009b](#page-43-8)). In addition, high consumption of stone fruits such as apples, pears, plums, cherries, and apricot could lead to high intakes of ethyl carbamate (Weber et al., [2009b](#page-43-8)). EC can be produced, under acidic conditions, via the reaction of urea (which can be found in raw materials like milk and many fermented foods) with ethanol. EC formation from urea will dramatically increase (based on the Arrhenius equation) with the temperature during various food processes such as baking, boiling, and toasting (Abt et al., [2021](#page-35-3)).

EC can be generated from several precursors like cyanogenic glycosides, arginine, urea, and citrulline during food and beverage fermentation depending on acidity, temperature, and microbial strain (Weber et al., [2009a;](#page-43-9) Zhao et al., [2013\)](#page-43-10). It can also be produced from cyanogenic glycosides in various processing stages. Enzymatic breakdown of cyanogenic glycosides generates hydrocyanic acid, which is subsequently oxidized to cyanate. The reaction of cyanate with ethanol produces EC (Zhao et al.,  $2013$ ). The decomposition of arginine by yeasts leads to urea formation, which its subsequent reaction with ethanol forms EC (Weber et al., [2009a](#page-43-9)). Moreover, EC may be formed from citrulline through the arginine deiminase pathway. Three enzymes named carbamate kinase, ornithine transcarbamylase, and arginine deiminase catalyze the cleavage of l-arginine. EC is created from two intermediate substances; carbamyl phosphate and citrulline (Jiao et al., [2014\)](#page-38-4).

# **Chlorinated compounds**

Chlorinated compounds (as sanitizing agents) play a vital role in the safe production, processing, transportation, and preparation of all food products (McLaren, [2000](#page-39-4)). Chlorine-based disinfectants are used in dairy, poultry, egg, and meat industries to prevent the growth of pathogens and foodborne diseases. They are available in solid forms, such as calcium hypochlorite, and liquid forms, like acidifed sodium chlorite, sodium hypochlorite, *N*-chloramines, and chlorine dioxide (Lehner et al., [2009](#page-39-5); Rafee et al., [2022](#page-41-0)). Moreover, chlorine and its derivatives are extensively used in the food industry to wash, sanitize, and sort fruits and vegetables. It is also extensively used in food processing and transportation to disinfect all surfaces (e.g., work surfaces, instruments, machinery, and containers) which contact with edible products (Chlorine Chemistry, [2002](#page-36-2)). Chlorine is predominantly added to water for washing and rinsing equipment

during routine cleaning-in-place (CIP) operations (Sadeghi et al., [2019\)](#page-41-4). Chlorinated compounds may be formed while washing food contact surfaces with chlorinated disinfectants (Cressey et al., [2008;](#page-36-3) Trinetta et al., [2011](#page-42-4)). Studies have indicated that chlorinated compounds and related by-products may be formed or introduced during the treatment of poultry, red meat, fsh and fshery products, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Despite the importance of chlorinated disinfectants in the food industry, there is relatively little information about the generation of potentially toxic chlorinated compounds through the reaction of disinfectants with food components. The formation of chlorinated compounds has been reported in chicken meat treated with aqueous chlorine (chlorine dioxide and acidifed sodium chlorite) mainly through oxidation reactions. It has been indicated that chlorination results in the formation of carcinogenic substances such as trihalomethanes and semicarbazide in poultry meat at sufficient concentrations of chlorine derivatives. For example, semicarbazide ( $CH_5N_3O$ ), a chemical belonging to the hydrazine family, which is known to be carcinogenic in animals, is formed following exposure of chicken flesh to sodium hypochlorite (Xie et al., [2014](#page-43-11)). Trihalomethanes (THM), like chloroform, have also been detected in chicken tissue after treatment with chlorinated chill water (Vizzier-Taxton et al., [2010\)](#page-42-5).

Chlorine dioxide  $(CIO<sub>2</sub>)$  is a polar gas highly soluble in water that can react with carbohydrates, lipids (fat), amino acids, peptides, and proteins in foods (Andrés et al., [2022\)](#page-35-4). Most commercial generators use sodium chlorite as the common precursor chemical to generate chlorine dioxide for drinking water applications (Hsieh et al., [2023\)](#page-37-1). Some reducing components in the food matrix, such as ascorbic acid, could readily be oxidized by the strong oxidant  $CIO<sub>2</sub>$  (Chen, [2017\)](#page-36-4). Oxidation is the predominant reaction of  $ClO<sub>2</sub>$  during chlorination. Thus, the double bonds in the fatty acid moieties in foods can undergo oxidation through  $\text{ClO}_2$  treatment. Therefore, caution should be exercised during the  $ClO<sub>2</sub>$  treatment of poultry meats that contain polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA), like linoleic acid. Cl $O_2$  can also react with carbohydrates through two pathways, namely oxidative cleavage of the  $C_2$  and  $C_3$  carbon bonds to form carboxylic acids and oxidation of the glycosidic bond. These reactions generally result in the production of oxidation products (Fukayama et al., [1986\)](#page-37-2). The reaction of  $ClO<sub>2</sub>$  at high concentrations with proteins and amino acids does not appear to result in chlorinated derivatives; however, the cleavage of hydrogen and peptide bonds, decomposition of aromatic amino acids, and oxidation of SH groups to SS bonds have been observed in wheat four treated with chlorine dioxide (Abedi et al., [2020](#page-34-0)). (Tan et al., [1987](#page-42-6)) reported that  $ClO<sub>2</sub>$  is reduced to chlorite ion during food treatment, and the amino acids are oxidized as cysteine produces cysteic acid, tyrosine forms dopaquinone, methionine is oxidized to sulfoxide and subsequently to the corresponding sulfone, and tryptophan forms indoxyl, isatine, and indigo red. The residues or transformation products that could result from food processing with  $ClO<sub>2</sub>$  are inorganic oxychlorine anions (i.e., chlorite, chlorate), oxidized organics (i.e., oxidized lipids, oxidized amino acids), and organochlorines (i.e., chlorinated lipids, chlorinated proteins) (FAO/WHO, [2008](#page-36-5)).

#### **Chloropropanols**

Chloropropanols are process-induced toxicants that can be formed during various food processes via the reaction of hydrochloric acid with glycerol and lipids (Wenzl et al., [2007\)](#page-43-12). The compounds 3-monochloropropane-1,2-diol (3-MCPD) and 2-monochloropropane-1,3-diol (2-MCPD) are well-investigated food contaminants, which have recently emerged as crucial problems due to the identifcation of high levels of fatty acid esters in the foods with high lipid contents. The most significant compounds of this group of toxins are presented in Table [2](#page-6-0). 3-MCPD, a well-known toxic compound, is detected in diverse food products, like acid hydrolyzed vegetable proteins (HVPs), cereals, beer, meat products, and many vegetable oils (Jędrkiewicz et al., [2016\)](#page-38-5). The primary source of human exposure to 3-MCPD is its generation through the heat treatment of foods. High-temperature processes (above 100 °C), including baking, broiling, grilling, or roasting, are signifcant factors in producing this compound in foods (Hamlet et al., [2002](#page-37-3)). The highest levels of 3-MCPD in food products (>1000 mg/kg) were generally identifed in soy sauce and soy sauce-based products, as well as in foods and food ingredients containing acid-hydrolyzed vegetable protein and high chloride (salt) content (Humans, [2013;](#page-38-6) Kanekanian, [2010\)](#page-38-7).

Chloropropanols are generated in HVPs through the hydrochloric acid-mediated hydrolysis step of the production process. Hydrochloric acid reacts with phospholipids, triacylglycerols, and glycerol and partial acylglycerols resulting from the acid hydrolysis of triacylglycerols (CONTAM, [2016\)](#page-36-6). Hydrochloric acid protonates the primary and secondary hydroxyl groups of glycerol to produce alkyloxonium cations. Dissociation of water from the primary and secondary alkyloxoniums and further reaction with the chloride result in a racemic mixture of 3-MCPD enantiomers and 2-MCPD, respectively. The 2- and 3-MCPD generation from acylglycerols and glycerol enhances with the salt concentration and gets the maximum at about 15% water content and is mainly produced from triacylglycerols rather than glycerol. 3-MCPD can also be produced through the direct

<span id="page-6-0"></span>



replacement of chloride ions with the hydroxyl group of glycerol (CONTAM, [2016](#page-36-6)). The maximum formation of 3-MCPD was observed when chloride reacted with lecithin, followed by the reaction of diacylglycerols and glycerol (Velisek et al., [2003](#page-42-7)).

# **Heterocyclic aromatic amines (HAAs)**

Amino acids are prominent constituents of most biomass, and their molecules contain the functional groups  $NH<sub>2</sub>$ and COOH. The exposure of high-protein foods such as meat products to elevated temperatures may lead to the pyrolysis of their amino acids, which is related to crucial health concerns (Moldoveanu, [2010\)](#page-40-3). Of particular interest among the pyrolysis products are the polycyclic aromatic compounds (PAC), including nitrogen-containing polycyclic aromatic compounds (N-PACs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) (Sharma et al., [2002](#page-41-5)). Therefore, pyrolysis of amino acids in the food matrix can produce a complex mixture of products. Zhao et al. ([2021\)](#page-43-13) observed high concentrations of *N*-containing heterocycles after the pyrolysis of lysine and tryptophan. In addition, it has been found that the pyrolysis of tryptophan could form β-carbolines (Bellmaine et al., [2020](#page-35-5)). Liu et al. [\(2016](#page-39-6)) reported quinoline derivatives, indole derivatives, and pyrrole derivatives as the pyrolysis products of proline. Sharma et al. [\(2002](#page-41-5)) indicated that proline was entirely converted to volatile products at 300 °C. A critical issue in the pyrolysis of amino acids in foods is the formation of heterocyclic aromatic amines. Heterocyclic aromatic amines (HAAs) are formed during high-temperature food processes, e.g., broiling, and cooking, especially in burned meat. The generation of HAAs is primarily related to the characteristics of the food matrix, such as the type of food and the presence of diferent precursors, water content, and lipids (Adeyeye et al.,  $2021$ ). These compounds are generally formed by heating nitrogen-containing food ingredients, mainly of animal origins, like creatine and proteins (Nadeem et al., [2021](#page-40-4)). Several HAAs have been isolated from pyrolysates formed from amino acids at 550 °C (Moldoveanu, [2010](#page-40-3)).

All HAAs have aromatic and heterocyclic structures and can be classifed into two main groups, polar or nonpolar (Cheng et al., [2006](#page-36-7); Murkovic, [2007\)](#page-40-5). Polar HAAs, also known as amino-imidazoazarenes (AIA), can be identifed by the 2-aminoimidazo group and a methyl group attached to one of the nitrogens in the imidazole ring system (Al-bashabsheh, [2019\)](#page-35-7). The imidazole ring is derived from creatine/creatinine. Consequently, the formation of polar HAAs does not occur without this precursor (Murkovic, [2007\)](#page-40-5). Polar HAAs are subgrouped, depending on the groups attached to the 2-amino-imidazo. These subgroups include quinolones, quinoxalines, and pyridines (Adeyeye, [2020](#page-35-8); Cheng et al., [2006\)](#page-36-7). In contrast, non-polar HAAs, known as amino-carbolines, are subdivided into pyridoindole and dipyridoimidazole types (Murkovic, [2007\)](#page-40-5). They consist of five-membered heterocyclic aromatic rings sandwiched between two six-membered aromatic rings (Cheng et al., [2006](#page-36-7)).

HAAs can also be classifed into IQ- (imidazoquino-lines) and non-IQ-types (Table [3](#page-7-0)). The HAAs produced at 150 to 300 °C are named IQ-type HAAs, thermic HAAs (imidazoquinoxaline or imidazoquinoline), or amino imidazoazarenes. At higher temperatures, pyrolysis of amino acids and proteins results in non-IQ-type HAAs or pyrolytic HAAs (Dong et al., [2020\)](#page-36-8). Both IQ- and IQxtypes HAAs are formed through the Maillard reaction, as postulated by many researchers (Quan et al., [2020](#page-41-6); Teng et al., [2018](#page-42-8)). In this view, sugars and amino acids reaction produces intermediates that undergo reverse-aldol reaction to give enol-type compounds, which then react with creatinine to form IQ- or IQx-type HAAs (Murkovic,  $2007$ ). The prevalent HAAs in meat include IQ, MeIQ,

<b>Polarity</b>	Group	<b>HAA</b>	<b>Chemical name</b>	IQ- or Non-IQ
Polar (Amino-Imidazo-Azarenes)	Quinolines	IQ	2-Amino-3-methylimidazo[4,5-f]quinolone	IQ
		MelQ	2-Amino-3,4-dimethylimidazo[4,5-f]quinoline	IQ
	Quinoxalines	IQx	2-Amino-3-methylimidazo[4,5-f]quinaxalines	<b>IQx</b>
		MelQx	2-Amino-3,8-dimethylimidazo[4,5-f]quinoxaline	IQx
		4,8-DiMelQx	2-Amino-3,4,8-trimethylimidazo[4,5-f]quinaxaline	IQx
		7,8-DiMelQx	2-Amino-3,7,8-trimethylimidazo[4,5-f]quinoxaline	IQx
		4,7,8-TriMeIQx	2-Amino-3,4,7,8-tettramethylimidazo [4,5-f]quinoxaline	IQx
	Pyridines	PhIP	2-Amino-1-methyl-6-phenylimidazo[4,5-b]pyridine	IQ
		<b>DMIP</b>	Dimethylimidazopyridine	IQ
		<b>TMIP</b>	Trimethylimidazopyridine	IQ
Non-Polar (Amino-Carbolines)	a-amino-carbolines	AaC	2-Amino-9H-dipyrido[2,3-b]indole	Non-IQ
		MeAaC	2-Amino-3-methyl-9H-dipyrido[2,3-b]indole	Non-IQ
	β-amino-carbolines	NorHarman	9H-Pyrido[3,4-b]indole	Non-IQ
		Harman	1-Methyl-9H-pyrido[3,4-b]indole	Non-IQ
	γ-amino-carbolines	$Trp-P-1$	3-Amino-1,4-dimethyl-5H-pyrido[4,3-b]indole	Non-IQ
		$Trp-P-2$	3-Amino-1-methyl-5H-pyrido[4,3-b]indole	Non-IQ
	δ-amino-carbolines	Glu-P-1	2-Amino-6-methyl-dipyrido[1,2-a:3',2'-d]imidazole	Non-IQ
		$Glu-P-2$	2-Amino-dipyrido[1,2-a:3',2'-d]imidazole	Non-IQ

<span id="page-7-0"></span>**Table 3** Some of the polar and non-polar heterocyclic aromatic amines

MeIQx, 4,8-DiMeIQx, PhIP, and AαC (Özsaraç et al., [2019](#page-40-6); Zhou et al., [2022b](#page-44-0)).

# **Benzene**

Benzene  $(C_6H_6)$  is an aromatic hydrocarbon extensively utilized as an intermediate for producing polymers and other products and as a solvent in the chemical industries. Human exposure to benzene happens via consuming contaminated water and foods and inhalation. Benzene can enter the food primarily through contaminated water, packaging, or raw materials and storage in polluted areas. It may also be formed during irradiation or cooking by thermal degradation of food ingredients, additives, and preservatives, like benzoate (Heshmati et al., [2018a;](#page-37-4) Sadighara et al., [2022\)](#page-41-7). Fruits and vegetables can be contaminated with benzene from emissions caused by fre and using fossil fuel-burning equipment (Salviano dos Santos et al., [2015](#page-41-8)). Benzene has also been detected in other foods and beverages containing benzoate salts and benzoic, ascorbic, or erythorbic acids, such as cranberry juice.

Benzene can be formed in foods through three mechanisms: (a) via the thermal pyrolysis and restructuring of precursors, (b) as a result of irradiation (by the radiolytic and oxidative breakdown of phenylalanine), and (c) from ascorbic acid and benzoate (Stadler et al., [2008](#page-42-0)). Ascorbic acid is utilized in food and beverages as a nutrient or preservative. The literature indicated benzene generation in beverages containing ascorbic acid and benzoate under certain conditions (Heshmati et al., [2018a](#page-37-4); Makhoul et al., [2019\)](#page-39-7). Benzene can be generated through decarboxylation of benzoic acid by a hydroxyl radical. Lachenmeier et al. ([2008](#page-38-8)) reported that carrot juices have high benzene contamination due to heat-induced formation. Benzene may also migrate into food from plastic containers (Alamri et al., [2021;](#page-35-9) Marć, [2020](#page-39-8)).

# *N***‑nitrosamines**

*N*-nitrosamines  $[R_1N(R_2)N=O]$  or *N*-nitroso compounds (NOCs) can easily be found in various foods and other matrices such as air, water, and packing materials. *N*-nitrosamines have been an issue raised from nitrite addition in production of processed meats such as bacon, sausage, and ham, to prevent the growth of *Clostridium botulinum*. These PITs are formed by reactions of *N*-containing substances (especially secondary amines) and their derivatives with nitrosating agents (Shakil et al., [2022](#page-41-9)). The nitrosating agent  $N_2O_3$  may be produced from nitrites  $(NO<sub>2</sub>)$ , nitrates  $(NO<sub>3</sub>)$ , and nitrocompounds  $(R-NO<sub>2</sub>)$ , such as nitrous acid  $(HNO<sub>2</sub>)$ , which can be formed from nitrogen oxides (NOx) under acidic conditions. The formation of *N*-nitroso compounds (NOCs) under basic conditions is of great importance for industrial or workplace situations (Stadler et al., [2008](#page-42-0)). In meats and meat products, *N*-nitrosamines can be formed during various processing operations such as curing, smoking, and salting. NOCs have also been found at trace levels in other foods, including cheese, cocoa, powdered milk and eggs, instant soups, coffee, and spices. *N*-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) is the predominant volatile *N*-nitrosamine found in fsh and seafood (Park et al., [2015](#page-40-7)). It can also be found in dairy products, beer, and other alcoholic beverages. The formation of nitrosamines increases with time, temperature (e.g., while fry-ing), and acidity (e.g., in the stomach) (NTP, [2016](#page-40-8)). The most signifcant *N*-nitroso compounds in foodstufs are summarized in Table [4.](#page-8-0)

(Chandan et al., [2013\)](#page-35-10) indicated that *N-*nitrosamines are unstable in PCCC processes (post-combustion  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  capture) because of the low electron density surrounding the nitrogen atoms. They are promptly decayed into carbonium ions and nitrogen gas  $(N_2)$ . Monoethanolamine (MEA), a primary amine for the PCCC process, cannot directly form stable *N-*nitrosamines in gas or liquid form. Nevertheless, it may be degraded to secondary amines, which are subsequently nitrosated to *N*-nitramines and *N*-nitrosamines by nitrite (Chen et al., [2018a](#page-36-9)). In addition, MEA can be converted into diethanolamine (DEA) by NOx, which is then nitrosated to nitrosodiethanolamine (NDEA) (Fostås et al., [2011](#page-37-5)). *N*-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) can be identifed as an MEA by-product, which may be generated via the breakdown of NDEA (Fostås et al., [2011](#page-37-5)). The volatile and small alkylamines (including aliphatic amine and psychotropic alkylamines) and mono- and dimethylamines (MMA and DMA, respectively) are also probable decomposition products of MEA (Lepaumier et al.,  $2009$ ). Moreover, the reaction of  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  and MEA may produce *N-*(2-hydroxyethyl) ethylenediamine (HEEDA), which can further be degraded into secondary amines, like morpholine (MOR) (Lepaumier et al., [2009](#page-39-9)). Consequently, *N-*nitrosomorpholine (NMOR) and NDMA can be generated through the nitrosation of MOR and DMA, respectively, or the decomposition of NDEA (Loeppky et al., [1979](#page-39-10)). In addition, *N*-nitramines and *N*-nitrosamines may be produced from

<span id="page-8-0"></span>**Table 4** Some important *N*-nitroso compounds



2-amino-2-methyl-1-propanol (AMP, which is more stable than MEA) by the reaction with NOx. Researchers have reported that the nitrosation of AMP is higher than that of MEA (Dai et al., [2013;](#page-36-10) Dai et al., [2012\)](#page-36-11). Secondary amines, like piperazine, morpholine, and diethanolamine, can directly form signifcant concentrations of stable nitrosamines. The formation rate of *N*-nitramines from primary amines is slower than that from secondary amines since the reactivity of secondary amine substituents is maintained in *N*-nitramines (Nielsen et al., [2012](#page-40-9)). The carcinogenic compounds *N*-Nitrosodialkylamines have been formed via the reaction of nitrite with secondary amines present in food in an acidic environment (Laskin et al.,  $2018$ ). The formation of nitrosamines in foods and other environments depends on the pH, temperature, and alkalinity of amine. The formation rate of *N*-nitroso compounds from secondary amines increases proportionally with a decrease in the alkalinity of the amines. Tertiary aliphatic amines do not react with dinitrogen trioxide  $(N_2O_3)$  in strong acidic pH and cannot directly generate *N*-nitrosamines in terms of the absence of amine hydrogen; however, they can produce *N*-nitramines by increases in pH at the optimum temperature of the nitrosation process (Gunturu et al., [2019](#page-37-6)).

To eliminate *N*-nirosamine formation in cured meat, Shahidi and co-workers formulated nitrite free curing systems, they pre-formed the natural colorant in cured products as part of the combinations (there are several papers with Pegg and also with Sen and 3 or so patents to reference a couple of them; Also, there is a book on the topic by Pegg and Shahidi) (Pegg et al., [2006,](#page-40-10) [2008;](#page-40-11) Shahidi et al., [1992](#page-41-10); Shahidi et al., [1991\)](#page-41-11).

# **Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)**

PAHs are environmentally resistant organic compounds with varied structures and toxicity consisting only of carbon and hydrogen atoms in two or more aromatic rings. PAHs can be formed either via biological processes or as products of incomplete combustion of fuels during industrial and some domestic cooking practices (Abdel-Shafy et al., [2016](#page-34-1)). Compounds containing up to four benzene rings are known as light PAHs (L-PAHs), and those containing more than four are known as heavy PAHs (H-PAHs). H-PAH are more stable and toxic than L-PAHs (Sahoo et al., [2020](#page-41-12)). Heat treatment or thermal processing such as grilling, broiling, frying, barbecuing, toasting, and roasting of fsh, meat, and other food products over direct fames or intense heat leads to the generation of PAHs on food surfaces. Some important PAHs in various foods are presented in Table [5](#page-9-0)**.** Benzo(a) pyrene (BaP) is a prototypical carcinogenic PAH, which can produce reactive cytotoxic and carcinogenic metabolites after metabolic activation by the cytochrome P450 enzymes (Crowell et al., [2014\)](#page-36-12). These PAHs are generated via condensing smaller organic substances through either pyrosynthesis or pyrolysis. These organic substances are

<span id="page-9-0"></span>**Table 5** The most important polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons



readily degraded (pyrolysis) at high temperatures, and the resulting free radicals are recombined to generate stable polynuclear aromatic components (pyrosynthesis). High temperatures (about 500–700 °C) are optimal for PAHs creation; however, they can also be produced at lower temperatures in various foods (Singh et al., [2016](#page-42-9)). A common pathway to yield PAHs may involve Diels– Alder reaction and rearrangement. The significance of pyrolysis depends on the process temperature. At temperatures below 400 °C, only low concentrations of PAHs are generated, while at 400 to 1000 °C, the PAH concentration linearly increases with temperature. Temperature infuences the structure and variety of the resulting PAHs (Chen et al.,  $2001$ ; Stadler et al.,  $2008$ ). The mechanism of hydrogen abstraction acetylene addition (HACA) is well accepted as the main reaction route leading to the formation of PAHs and nascent soot in combustion fames (Liu et al., [2019](#page-39-11)). Another reason for HACA to be the prevalent PAH formation mechanism is a high abundance of benzene/phenyl and acetylene in combustion fames of various types of aromatic and aliphatic fuels (including ethane, butane, butadiene, ethylene, methane, benzene, toluene, heptane, gasoline mixtures and even several types of polymers such as polystyrene, polyethylene, and polyvinyl chloride) in a broad range of distances from the burner surface (Kislov et al., [2013](#page-38-10); Roesler et al., [2003](#page-41-13); Wang et al., [2003](#page-43-14)). The PAHs can be formed under local fuel-rich conditions by adding  $C_2-C_5$  hydrocarbons to aromatic rings followed by ring closure (National Research Council, [1988](#page-40-12)).

High contents of PAH have been reported in foods such as fish smoked by traditional techniques, mussels and other seafood from polluted waters, and charcoal-grilled or barbecued foods such as fatty meat and meat products processed under prolonged and severe heat conditions (Duedahl-Olesen et al., [2022;](#page-36-13) Farrington, [2020](#page-36-14); Kafouris et al., [2020\)](#page-38-11). The PAHs are also generated in coffee during the roasting process of green coffee beans (Houessou et al., [2005,](#page-37-7) [2008\)](#page-37-8). The PAH production in fat and edible oils is mainly associated with the contaminated raw material and the contamination during processing (e.g., solvent extraction or seed drying). High PAH amounts can be formed in oils during drying the raw seeds with direct fre (Stadler et al., [2008](#page-42-0)). In addition, wheat, oats, barley, and corn grown close to industrial areas contain higher PAH amounts than similar crops cultivated in farther sites (Şahin et al., [2022\)](#page-41-14). Researchers have indicated that PAHs in vegetables can be detected in the soil in which they have been cultivated. According to reports, the presence of these compounds in carrots or potatoes can be reduced by washing and peeling. However, when it comes to leafy vegetables like lettuce, removing these compounds is difficult due to their entrapment in the hydrophobic cell walls of the plants (Huang et al., [2018](#page-37-9); Mohammed et al., [2019;](#page-40-13) Zhao et al., [2021\)](#page-43-13).

#### **Maillard reaction products (MRPs)**

The non-enzymatic browning reaction, also named the Maillard reaction (MR), is an amino-carbonyl or sugaramino reaction that occurs widely in food and biological systems (Gürsul Aktağ et al., [2021](#page-37-10)). Processing at high temperatures ( $\hat{O}$  150 °C) and low moisture contents results in an interaction between reducing sugars and amino acids generally in less than 2 h, at a pH of 7.4, leading to diferent favors and brown colors of foods, like milk, honey, malt, bread, and cocoa (Wang et al., [2011](#page-42-10)). Under these conditions, some carbohydrates, such as oligo- and polysaccharides, preferentially react as complete molecules at the reducing end. Maillard reaction products (MRPs) include aldehydes, ketones, dicarbonyls, acrylamides, and heterocyclic amines, all of which contribute to favor, as well as melanoidins and advanced glycation end products (AGEs), which are polymeric products formed at the advanced stages of MR and some of them can be carcinogenic (Tamanna et al., [2015](#page-42-11)). AGEs, as reactive intermediates, and other MRPs are produced via parallel and sequential counteractions involving cyclization, dehydration, enolization, fragmentation, and oxida-tion (Poulsen et al., [2013\)](#page-41-15). The Maillard reaction reduces the bioavailability of essential amino acids, such as lysine, and results in the formation of advanced Maillard reaction products, such as Ne-(2-furoylmethyl)-l-lysine (Furosine), which is a marker of the Maillard reaction (van Rooijen et al., [2014](#page-42-12)). Several main MRPs in food matrices are listed in Table [6](#page-11-0).

The Maillard reaction in food can occur under acidic or neutral conditions (A) and in alkaline media (B), as shown below (Singla et al., [2018](#page-42-13)).

A) The first stage involves the reaction of a nitrogencontaining molecule and a reducing sugar (a hexose) that produces water and an intermediate (an *N*-substituted glycosylamine, which is called Schiff's base). The Amadori rearrangement results in a 1-amino-1-deoxy-2-ketose. At a pH of  $\leq$ 7, the Amadori product would be converted into Schif's base furfural or 5-hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF), which can subsequently generate various products, including brownish melanoidins. The simultaneous creation of various sub-products, such as gaseous substances and 3-deoxyglucosone, should be noticed.

B) The first stages (in acidic or neutral conditions) aford the Amadori product. At a pH greater than 7, the Amadori product undergoes transformations into different intermediates, which include dicarbonyl (fssion) products and reductones. Reductones, when in a state of chemical equilibrium with dehydroreductones, have the potential to interact with fssion products, resulting



<span id="page-11-0"></span>**Table 6** Some main Maillard reaction products

in the formation of melanoidins or aldehydes. The dicarbonyl products (e.g., methylglyoxal and diacetyl) can also produce α-aminoketones. Anyhow, brownish melanoidins are the fnal products of the Maillard reaction.

### **Biogenic amines (BAs)**

The most prevalent biologically active amines in food products (exogenous BAs) are histamine, putrescine, cadaverine, tryptamine, tyramine, and phenethylamine (Mohammadi et al.,  $2023b$ ). They are typically formed by microbial decarboxylation of amino acids and may be produced in any foodstuff subjected to the fermentation process or microbial contamination during processing, ripening, or storage (Afaki et al., [2014\)](#page-35-12). In addition, putrescine may be created via the deamination of agmatine, a polyamine derived from arginine. Physiologically natural amines (endogenous BAs), including spermine and spermidine, are not generated by microbial decarboxylases. Their intracellular biosynthesis requires the aminopropyl group internalization into the precursor putrescine. Structures of main BAs in food formed by decarboxylation of respective amino acids are shown in Table [7.](#page-12-0) Although biogenic amines in foods generally have microbiological origins, the natural polyamines spermine and spermidine are the principal amines in fresh foodstufs like fsh, milk, meat, fruits, and vegetables where microbial growth and proliferation have not occurred. Several bacterial groups, such as Enterobacteriaceae and lactic acid bacteria (LAB), can decarboxylate amino acids and generate variable quantities of BAs (Motarjemi, [2013](#page-40-15)). Thermal processing can destroy the BAs-producing bacteria in foods; however, some BAs, like histamine, may still be formed in thermally processed food products in case of recontamination and temperature abuse after heating (Naila et al., [2010\)](#page-40-16). According to reports, the consumption of *N*-nitroso compounds and nitrites, which include those derived from BAs, leads to a slight increase in the accumulation of nitrogenous compounds in the body. However, these compounds primarily originate from microbial activities and the internal metabolic processes of nitrates consumed by mammals (Motarjemi, [2013](#page-40-15)).

# **Correlation of PITs with food sensory aspects**

It has been known that high-temperature food processing leads to the generation of several decomposition compounds, which may provide either desirable qualities, like delicious taste and odor, or render undesirable outcomes, such as adverse health efects. Aromatized foods have been developed in recent decades due to increased progress in the food industry. Thermal processing technologies lead to several chemical reactions, including the

<b>Type</b>	Precursor	<b>Biogenic Amine</b>	<b>Structure</b>
Aromatic amines	L-Phenylalanine	Phenylethylamine	$\frac{H}{C}$ NH <sub>2</sub> C $H_{2}$
	L-Tyrosine	Tyramine	$\frac{H}{C}$ NH <sub>2</sub> GŹ HO
	L-Histidine	Histamine	$\frac{H}{C}$ NH <sub>2</sub> Gʻ,
	L-Tryptophan	Tryptamine	NH <sub>2</sub> Н,
Aliphatic amines	L-Arginine and L-Glutamine via L- Agmatine and L-Ornithine	Putrescine	H <sub>2</sub> $H_2N$ NH <sub>2</sub> $\overline{H}_2$
	L-Lysine	Cadaverine	$\frac{H}{C}$ $\frac{H}{2}$ NH <sub>2</sub> $H_2$ C H <sub>2</sub> H <sub>2</sub> H <sub>2</sub>
Polyamines	Putrescine	Spermidine	$\frac{H}{C}$ H <sub>2</sub> $H_2N$ NH <sub>2</sub> $T_{\rm H_2}$ $T_{\rm H_2}^{\rm C}$
	Putrescine	Spermine	$H_2N$ NH <sub>2</sub>

<span id="page-12-0"></span>**Table 7** Several main biogenic amines

Maillard reaction, caramelization, and lipid oxidation, afecting food safety and sensory quality. Food aromatization requires thermal-induced changes, the presence or absence of additional salt, oil, and sugar, or the replacement of some natural favor ingredients. Moreover, optimal formulation and processing strategies of food aroma incorporated systems are needed to warrant the successful inclusion and protection of favor ingredients such as amino acids and carbohydrates, thus preventing their degradation and formation of off-flavor in the final product (Guerzoni et al., [2011\)](#page-37-11).

Acrolein (2-propenal), one of the most undesirable food PITs, is produced during deep-frying in edible fats and oils. According to (Ewert et al., [2012\)](#page-36-15), the concentration of acrolein signifcantly increased in oils containing high amounts of linolenic acid, such as rapeseed/canola or linseed/fax oils. In this connection, (Endo et al., [2013](#page-36-0)) stated that there is a relationship between acrolein content and linolenic acid as its primary source during the heating of vegetable oils. (Shibata et al., [2018](#page-41-16)) demonstrated that acrolein could be formed as the main volatile compound from the triacylglycerol oxidation of fsh oil. The thermal degradation of glycerin was specified with an aldehyde, named acrolein by Berzelius, that is a contraction of 'acrid' (due to its pungent smell) and 'oleum' (oil or oil-like consistency) (Pradipta et al., [2021](#page-41-17)). It has been reported that in an extremely diluted condition, the odor of acrolein is not entirely undesirable, being

somewhat ethereal; however, low amounts of acrolein in the room environment quickly brings the workers' eyes to tears (Stevens et al., [2011](#page-42-14)). It also provides irritating and unpleasant odors in processed food. The smell of burnt fat while heating/cooking oils to the smoke point is caused by the pyrolysis of glycerol to acrolein (Ng et al.,  $2019$ ). The reaction of the carbonyl with oils, e.g., butter, tallow, peanut oil, and corn oil, results in the production of volatile compounds, such as acrolein (Khorshidian et al., [2015](#page-38-12); Pickenhagen et al., [1996](#page-41-18)).

Mercapto favor compounds, the sulfur-containing substances responsible for meat favor, are valuable aroma components providing pleasant and desirable favors to foods such as onion, sesame oil, garlic, and barbecued and thermally-processed foods. Thus, the mercapto flavor compounds may be used as a food additive. They can also be produced via microbial decomposition of methionine and cysteine, resulting in sulfdic, mercaptan-like, hydrogen sulfide, and stale cabbage off-odors. These compounds are also produced during the thermal processing of food via the Maillard reaction together with acrylamide. Therefore, they may coexist with acrylamide in thermally processed foods. However, when these favor compounds react with acrylamide through Michael addition reactions, also called a Michael donor, sulfur anions  $(S<sup>2−</sup>)$  are about 280 times more reactive than amino groups  $(-NH<sub>2</sub>)$  in environments with the analogous reaction mechanism. Accordingly, mercapto favor

compounds can considerably afect the acrylamide concentration in food (Mohammadi et al., [2021](#page-40-18); Xiong et al., [2017](#page-43-15)). Moreover, thermal processing time and temperature may signifcantly infuence acrylamide content and food color. Increasing frying time and temperature can cause the browning of food and result in acrylamide production (Koh, [2007](#page-38-13)).

HOCs have been recognized as signifcant volatile compounds in many foods. These compounds are present in traces in food favors such as those of meat (beef, lamb, chicken), fsh, cereals (wheat, corn, rice, barley), bread, nuts (peanuts, almonds, soya bean, flberts, pecan), milk and dairy products, fruits, vegetables (potatoes, artichoke, asparagus, dry red beans, beetroots, leeks, tomatoes), spices and condiments (trassi, pepper), alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages (tea, cocoa, coffee, beer, whiskey, rum), essential oils (jasmine), and tobacco. Studies on flavors of deep-fat fried foods indicated the existence of furan, pyridines, pyrazines, cyclic polysulfdes, oxazoles, and thiazole, with long-chain alkyl substitutes on their heterocyclic ring. The compound 2-pentylpyridine with potent tallow-like and fatty odor was identifed in fried chicken and French fries favors (Hou et al., [2019](#page-37-12); Song et al., [2012\)](#page-42-15). Pyrazines are the principal contributors to cocoa products' roasted, nutty, green, and earthy aromas. It has been reported that alkylpyrazines have toasted, nutty, or roasted notes and signifcantly participate in roasted and fried chicken favors (Bicas et al., [2021\)](#page-35-13). The compounds 2,5-dialkylpyrazines in wine, originating from oak wood, reminisced rancid butter (Shinkaruk et al., [2019;](#page-41-19) Wu et al., [2021\)](#page-43-16). In addition, 2-methylpyrazine imparted nutty and chocolate favors, and 2-ethyl-6-methylpyrazine induced roasted hazel-nut flavor to light-roasted coffee (Lee et al., [2017\)](#page-39-12). However, these two compounds generated fermented, harsh, and overripe favors, also known as a black roast defect, in dark-roasted coffee (Yang et al., [2016\)](#page-43-17). Furthermore, 2-hydroxymethyl-3,6-diethyl-5-methylpyrazine caused burnt or overcooked rice favor in alcoholic beverages (Zhao et al., [2018a,](#page-43-18) [2018b\)](#page-43-19). Pyrazine derivatives 2-isopropyl-methoxypyrazine and 2-isobutyl-methoxypyrazine resulted in moldy and earthy off-flavors in fish (Mohammadi et al., [2021](#page-40-18)). Similarly, 3-alkyl-2-methoxypyrazines contributed to earthy off-flavor in potato products. Naturally occurring methoxyalkylpyrazines also imparted green and earthy notes to fruits and vegetables (Bicas et al., [2021\)](#page-35-13). Trimethylpyrazine and tetramethylpyrazine are the main components with a grassy and nutty favor in cocoa products (Barišić et al., [2019\)](#page-35-14). *N*-Heterocyclic bases, such as 2-acetyltetrahydropyridine, 2-acetyl-1-pyrroline, and 2-ethyltetrahydropyridine, could induce a mousy odor to wine (Snowdon et al., [2006;](#page-42-16) Wu et al.,

[2021](#page-43-16)). The roasted and popcorn-like aroma of cooked rice was attributed to 2-acetyl-1-pyrroline. The odor of rice bran was also ascribed to 2-acetylthiazole (Lina et al., [2022](#page-39-13)). Thiazoles are a group of HOCs with a five-membered ring containing nitrogen and sulfur in the 3 and 1 positions, respectively (Ripain et al., [2021\)](#page-41-20). Some of the alkylthiazoles detected in processed foods like French fried potato, including 2-butyl-4-propylthiazole, 2-butyl-4-methyl-5-ethyl thiazole, 2,4-dimethyl-5-pentylthiazole, and 2,4-dimethyl-5-propylthiazole, have a potent characteristic green, sulfury, and sweet aroma. Thiazolines, reduced forms of thiazoles, such as 2-ethyl-4,5-dimethyl-3-thiazoline and 5-ethyl-2,4-dimethyl-3-thiazoline, have also been identifed as contributors to the meaty odor in boiled beef and chicken (Yeo et al., [2022\)](#page-43-20). One of the most noticeable products of substituted pyridines is 2-acetyl tetrahydropyridine, which imparts a mousy of-favor to wine (Hayasaka, [2019](#page-37-13)). Furthermore, 2-acetylpyridine and 3-carbomethoxy-pyridine are substantial components of potato chips and roasted nuts, respectively (Vernin, [1982](#page-42-17)). According to Zhang et al. [\(2021\)](#page-43-21), *N*-heterocyclic compounds impart roasted, earthy, burnt, and nutty odors to oils extracted from seeds roasted at 150 °C. It has been found that *O*-heterocyclic compounds contribute to the caramel-like aroma, *N*-heterocyclics correlate to bready, nutty, and corny aromas, and *S*-heterocyclic compounds have meaty, roasted, or vegetable notes (Zha et al., [2021](#page-43-22)). (Carvalho et al., [2022](#page-35-15)) indicated that furan derivatives remarkably contribute to tamarind aroma. (Bicas et al., [2021](#page-35-13)) reported that furans induce caramel- and cofee-like notes to light-roasted cofee and spicy and bitter flavors to dark-roasted coffee. The compound 2-pentylfuran was recognized as responsible for sweet, green, fruity, and fre-burning aromas, and 2-ethylfuran was correlated to grassy, fruity, and floral odors in fermented dark tea (Xiao et al., [2022](#page-43-23)). (Lina et al., [2022](#page-39-13)) reported that 2-pentylfuran causes a nut-like aroma in cooked rice at low concentrations; however, high concentrations give less pleasant soybean aroma characteristics. The compound 2-methyl-3-furanthiol produces a sulfur and meaty off-flavor in alcoholic beverages and vegetable and sulfury flavors in dark-roasted coffee (Bicas et al., [2021](#page-35-13); Wang et al., [2020a,](#page-42-18) [2020b](#page-42-19)). This compound and bis (2-methyl-3-furyl) disulfde were identifed as substantial contributors to the meaty odor of cooked pork, chicken, and beef (Bicas et al., [2021\)](#page-35-13). Some pyrazoles, such as tartrazine (E102), are widely used as food colorants (Mandal, [2019\)](#page-39-14).In addition*, N*-methylimidazoles such as 4-(5-) methylimidazole are recognized as aromatic heterocyclic organic compounds. During the caramelization process in the food industry, 4-(5-) methylimidazole (4-MeI) can be produced, which is considered a caramel marker (Cunha et al., [2011\)](#page-36-16).

EC is a by-product of various food processes such as distillation, fermentation, and long-term storage (Hasnip et al., [2004\)](#page-37-14). According to the literature, EC is almost odorless and colorless, with a cooling, saline, and bitter taste (HSDB, [2006](#page-37-15)).

Chlorinated compounds contribute to the favor of foods and emanate from both natural and pollutant sources. These compounds are the most prevalent halogenated favor components introduced to food (Kittel et al., [2002](#page-38-14)). It has been found that chlorine contributes to the favor primarily in the form of chloroanisoles. Researchers have shown that chloroanisoles can be found in musty-favored foods and beverages (Monteiro et al., [2022](#page-40-19); Muchiri et al., [2020\)](#page-40-20). According to (Curtis et al., [1974](#page-36-17)), chicken feed containing chloroanisoles resulted in musty-tasting meat. In this connection, 2,4,6-trichloroanisole, a chlorinated derivative of anisole, is the chief cause of cork taint and smell in all bottled food products, such as wine, that use cork stoppers (Cravero, [2020](#page-36-18)). Studies have indicated that at slightly higher concentrations, this compound could impart a moldy, musty, dank, or cellar-like favor to the wine (Mazzoni et al., [2020](#page-39-15); Slabizki, [2016](#page-42-20)). It has been reported that 2,3,6-trichloroanisole induced moldy off-flavor in fish (Mohammadi et al., [2021](#page-40-18)). (Bleicher et al., [2022](#page-35-16)) suggested that the volatile halogenated compounds could contribute to meat aromas. Chlorine favor and unpleasant taste can be formed in drinking water and raw food when contaminated with chlorinated compounds (Puget et al., [2010](#page-41-21)). Chlorophenols and bromophenols were identifed as contributors to medicinal and iodine-like off-flavors in fish (Mohammadi et al., [2021](#page-40-18)).

In many foods, especially plant-based meat alternatives, hydrolyzed vegetable proteins are utilized as seasonings or favoring agents to give a richer or meat-like taste (Wang et al., [2022a\)](#page-43-24). During the production of HVPs, organic chemical compounds chloropropanols, including 3-MCPD and 1,3-DCP, can be formed via the reaction of the hydrochloric acid with residual lipids and the reaction of 3-MCPD with acetic acid, respectively (Genualdi et al., [2017\)](#page-37-16). Pure 3-MCPD is a liquid with a pleasant odor and a straw color (Humans, [2013\)](#page-38-6).

As mentioned, the mechanism of HAAs formation depends on the heating temperature and time during thermal processing. HAAs are identifed as the principal toxicants formed in protein-rich foods like meat and meat products during thermal processing and favorforming (Barzegar et al.,  $2019$ ). These compounds may be present in trace levels in Maillard reaction products and contribute to Amadori-type processed favors. Furthermore, these browning-type food favoring components can participate in meat, bread, and other culinary favors (Teng et al., [2018](#page-42-8)). Sugars and free amino acids on the meat surface react through the Maillard reaction during thermal processing, resulting in various products essential for the favor and color of cooked meat and meat products. Furthermore, sulfur-containing amino acids are acknowledged as precursors for the ultimate taste of these foodstufs (Shahidi et al., [2014](#page-41-22)). (Gibis et al., [2010](#page-37-17)) indicated that the preference for roasted favor and color signifcantly increases HAAs' daily intake.

The primary reactions during the heating that lead to the formation of favors in foods such as meat and meat products include pyrolysis, thermal degradation, inter-reactions of amino acids and peptides, or interaction of sugars with amino acids or peptides (Shahidi, [2012\)](#page-41-23). Sulfur-containing amino acids like cysteine and methionine are considered indispensable for developing the characteristic aroma of some foods, such as onion and cabbage (Marcinkowska et al., [2022](#page-39-2)). (Fujimaki et al., [1969](#page-37-18)) identifed 7 to 8 volatile compounds from pyrolyzed cysteine and cystine, including 2-methylthiazolidine (a result of the reaction of acetaldehyde with mercaptethylamine), and 11 volatile compounds from the pyrolysis of methionine. The volatile compounds generated from the pyrolysis of L-cysteine and DL-methionine created popcorn-like and methylmercaptane aromas, respectively. The heterocyclic compounds produced from cystine via Maillard reactions and Strecker degradation revealed the strongsmelling notes of sulfur, roasted and toasted foods, popcorn, hazelnut, and ripe fruits (Pripis-Nicolau et al., [2000](#page-41-24)). Cysteine and methionine, which generate volatile compounds with low olfactory thresholds, such as methional, through light-induced oxidation reactions and Strecker degradation, play a signifcant role in wine aroma and off-odors (Mayr et al., [2015\)](#page-39-16). Hydrogen sulfde produced from cystine or cysteine induced a rotten egg odor in alcoholic beverages (Wu et al., [2021\)](#page-43-16). (Fracassetti et al., [2021](#page-37-19)) associated cabbage- and onion-like odors and light-struck taste in white wine with methanethiol and dimethyl disulfde. Likewise, methanethiol was recognized as a contributor to sulfur, garlic, rotten, or cabbage off-flavors in Baijiu, an alcoholic beverage (Wang et al., [2020a,](#page-42-18) [2020b](#page-42-19)). Volatile sulfdes generated through the brewing process, especially dimethyl sulfde, could also impart unpleasant roasted corn, rotten vegetable, or sulfur smells to beer (Wu et al., [2021\)](#page-43-16). (Dong et al., [2019](#page-36-19)) related 3-(methylthio) propanal with onion favor in alcoholic beverages. Besides, dimethyl disulfde and dimethyl trisulfde imparted sulfde odor and Japanese pickles off-flavor to alcoholic beverages, respectively (Chen et al.,  $2017$ ; Wang et al.,  $2020<sub>b</sub>$ ). These two compounds were also related to the cooked favor in potato products (Kocadağlı et al., [2021\)](#page-38-15). In this regard, several

researchers have shown that methional, methanethiol, and alkyl sulfdes could contribute to the sulfur-, cabbage-, onion-, and garlic-like notes in the odor profle of diferent cheese types (Bicas et al., [2021;](#page-35-13) Ianni et al., [2020\)](#page-38-16). It has been indicated that phenylacetaldehyde and 3-methylbutyraldehyde, the Strecker degradation products of phenylalanine and leucine, have roasted peanut and refreshing malty aromas, respectively (Lina et al., [2022;](#page-39-13) Weerawatanakorn et al., [2015](#page-43-25)). Several researchers reported honey-like and floral aroma characteristics of phenylacetaldehyde (Bicas et al., [2021;](#page-35-13) Jin et al., [2019;](#page-38-17) Kocadağlı et al., [2021\)](#page-38-15). Acetaldehyde and diacetyl, produced during beer fermentation, could cause pungent grassy and butterscotch off-flavors in beer, respectively (Olaniran et al., [2017](#page-40-21); Wu et al., [2021\)](#page-43-16). Acetaldehyde can also induce fresh-fruity notes in yogurt and nutty, bruised apple and almondy favors in wine. Moreover, acetaldehyde and dimethyl sulfde contribute to the cooked odor in tomato products (Bicas et al., [2021\)](#page-35-13).

Benzenes can be formed in foods and soft drinks via process-induced changes, like high-temperature chemical transformations and ionizing radiation, and from the reactions of added or naturally occurring precursors such as ascorbic acid and sodium benzoate. Moreover, they may be formed in food additives, like liquid smoke, through processing (Desvita et al., [2021;](#page-36-20) Heshmati et al., [2018a\)](#page-37-4). Benzene generation was also reported during the production of soft drinks, especially those with an orange favor (Mercer, [2006](#page-39-17)). Results from the State of Florida Laboratories indicated trace amounts of benzene in Koala Springs favored-mineral water (Morsi et al., [2012](#page-40-22)). It has been demonstrated that 1,2,3-trimethoxybenzene contributes to the stale odor; 1,2-dimethoxybenzene was related to fabric, grass, and wood attributes, and benzaldehyde imparted floral and honey-like aromas to fermented dark tea (Xiao et al., [2022\)](#page-43-23). (Jin et al., [2019](#page-38-17)) described the almond-like favor characteristics of benzaldehyde. Benzeneacetaldehyde imparted a floral aroma in stir-fried beef (Bai et al., [2022\)](#page-35-19).

Cured meats have excellent marketability in terms of desirable texture, favor and color, and long-term shelf life (Da Silva Cardoso et al., [2020\)](#page-36-21). *N*-nitrosamines are formed in cured meats and other food products because nitrite, nitrate, and salts are added to these products to inhibit the germination of *Clostridium botulinum* spores and their toxin formation. Nitrite can also prevent the extension of off-flavors and react with pigments in meat products to impart the desired pink color of cured meats (Scanlan, [2003\)](#page-41-25). According to Deng et al. [\(2021](#page-36-22)), the characteristic cured favor of bacon is primarily due to the action of nitrite on the meat, and acceptable bacon can be manufactured using sodium nitrite. During meat cooking, *N*-nitrosopiperidine can participate in cured meat products' aroma (Krol et al., [1974\)](#page-38-18).

Production of smoked foods such as smoked meat and fsh (mainly via smoking, grilling, frying, roasting, baking, etc.) has been very popular for at least 10,000 years. Nowadays, smoking is generally applied to generate a pleasant favor, color, and appearance in smoked foodstuffs. The principal smoke flavoring components are carbonyl compounds rendering the traditional color and texture of smoked foods, phenolic compounds, and organic acids, especially acetic acid (IOFI, [2012](#page-38-19)). However, health hazards might be related to smoked foods due to the potential presence of carcinogenic compounds of wood smoke, primarily PAHs and their derivatives, like oxygenated PAHs or nitro-PAHs (Shen et al., [2012](#page-41-26)). Very high combustion temperatures have been used in traditional food smoking processes in which foods were directly subjected to all compounds of the smoke. Direct heating of meat products results in higher amounts of PAHs than indirect methods in which PAHs are somewhat omitted via condensation in tars (Boylston et al., [2012](#page-35-20); Šimko, [2005](#page-42-21)). The PAHs composition and concentration and the intensity of smoke favor in food products depend on various factors, such as the heat source, oxygen accessibility, smoking temperature and duration, fat content, the water activity of the foodstuf, the distance between the heating source and the food, design of the instrument, and fat drainage, among others (Abdel-Shafy et al., [2016](#page-34-1); García-Falcón et al., [2005\)](#page-37-20). The highest PAH amounts in smoked foods are typically observed on food surfaces, and the maximum concentrations of these compounds are produced at the end of the smoking process (Essumang et al., [2014\)](#page-36-23). (Guillén et al., [2004\)](#page-37-21) reported high amounts of PAHs with diferent molecular weights as the main favor ingredients of smoked artesian cheese.

In several food systems, carbohydrates such as monosaccharides and polysaccharides are involved in preserving a broad spectrum of ligand molecules like favor and odor compounds. In addition, proteins and sugars are essential for various chemical reactions. Maillard reaction is a signifcant factor afecting food favor and is related to the type and proportion of amino acids and reducing sugars. Researchers have reported that some functions of MRPs are associated with the sensory characteristics of the fnal food product (Bredie et al., [2006](#page-35-21); Jaeger et al., [2010\)](#page-38-20). The Maillard reaction results in protein cross-linking, AGEs formation, browning of the fnal product, and the generation of favor compounds. Melanoidins are heterogeneous nitrogen-containing brown pigments produced by the Maillard reaction (Henle,  $2005$ ). The primary step of the Maillard reaction (Fig. [2](#page-16-0)) is a Schif base formation through an interaction between the carbonyl groups of reducing sugars and the amino

ö

3

 $H$ -റ  $N^{-R'}$ 

Rearrangement

Amadori





<span id="page-16-0"></span>**Fig. 2** The simple schematic of color and flavor formation in the Maillard reaction

nitrogen of amino acids. The Schiff base may be rearranged to generate an Amadori product, whose further decomposition creates principal intermediates for producing color and favor compounds (Stadler et al., [2008](#page-42-0)).

The Maillard reaction is extensively utilized to improve the aroma of bakery products, meat products, and beverages. Pyrazines, by-products of the Maillard reaction, participate in cocoa, cooked, roasted, and toasted favors (Farah et al., [2012\)](#page-36-24). Methoxypyrazines, predominantly found in various alcoholic beverages, possess an aroma of green bell pepper (Wamhoff et al., [2012](#page-42-22)). Several MRPs participate in diverse food favors, such as pyrroles (cereal-like and nutty favors), alkylpyrazines (nut, barbecue, bitter, burnt, scorched, and astringent favors), acylpyridines (cracker-like and cereal favors), furanone (sweet, caramel, and burnt favors), furans (meaty, burnt, and caramel-like favors), furfural (caramel, bready, woody, and sweet aroma), oxazoles (green, nutty, and sweet favors), and thiophenes (meaty and roasted favors) (Chang et al., [2021;](#page-35-22) Compoundchem, [2015;](#page-36-25) Li et al., [2020b\)](#page-39-18). (Wu et al., [2018\)](#page-43-26) indicated that the bread supplemented with Maillard reaction products had a better smell and taste than ordinary bread. Furfural was identifed as a contributor to the bitter taste in alcoholic beverages and fresh bread and cofee-like notes in roasted coffee. The honey-like flavor of roasted coffee was also attributed to HMF (Bicas et al., [2021](#page-35-13); Wu et al., [2021](#page-43-16)). According to (Zha et al., [2021\)](#page-43-22), furaneol (4-hydroxy-2,5-dimethyl-3(2H)-furanone), which is a furan derivative, has strawberry-like and burnt pineapple aromas and can be utilized as a flavor enhancer in sweet food products. This compound was also involved in the sweet odor of roasted almonds, the curry-like or burnt sugar-like ofodor in nonfat dry milk, and the caramel-like and meaty notes of cooked beef (Bicas et al., [2021;](#page-35-13) Jin et al., [2019](#page-38-17); Yang et al., [2013](#page-43-27)). The cooked meat flavor characteristic of 3-methyl-2-thiophene carboxaldehyde was reported by Shen et al. (Shen et al., [2021\)](#page-41-27). (Chen et al., [2018b](#page-36-26)) showed that 2-octylfuran and 3-phenylfuran induced caramel-like favor, geranyl acetone, (E)-2-octen-1-ol, and 1-octen-3-ol were signifcantly related to mushroom-like favor, however, 3-methylbutanal, 2,5-thiophenedicarboxaldehyde, and 2-thiophene-carboxaldehyde contributed to the meat-like characteristic of MRPs. Other researchers have also demonstrated the mushroom-like aroma of 1-octen-3-ol (De Araújo Cordeiro et al., [2020;](#page-36-27) Lina et al., [2022](#page-39-13); Wu et al., [2021;](#page-43-16) Xiao et al., [2022](#page-43-23)). (Bassam et al., [2022](#page-35-23)) reported that 2-pentylfuran was related to caramel-like, sweet, and burnt aromas in the aroma profle of grilled meat. Ethyl maltol (2-ethyl-3-hydroxy-4(4H)

pyranone) has been found to give a caramel-like aroma to foods (Zha et al., [2021](#page-43-22)). Generally, 125 °C was identifed as an optimal temperature for preparing MRPs with abundant volatile compounds and favorable sensory characteristics. The concentration of free amino acids and 50-GMP, which participate in the umami taste, in MRPs derived under 125 °C were 3 to 4 times higher than those in the mushroom hydrolysate (Chen et al., [2018b](#page-36-26)). According to (Huang et al., [2011](#page-37-23)), controlling the Maillard reaction by some sulfur-containing compounds, such as L-cysteine and thiamine, may allow tastier and healthier (more antioxidant activity) foods to fulfll food producers' and consumers' demands. It has been reported that heterocyclic sulfur-containing compounds are the most signifcant MRPs responsible for cooked meat's boiled, roasted, meaty, and savory flavor (Ismail et al., [2022\)](#page-38-21). Cooked meat aroma characteristic of sulfurcontaining MRPs was also indicated by Ji et al. (Ji et al., [2020](#page-38-22)). (Shen et al., [2021\)](#page-41-27) demonstrated that dimethyl trisulfde has an onion-like aroma at low concentrations; however, high concentrations result in the undesirable sulfur flavor of MRPs. (Karangwa et al., [2017\)](#page-38-23) showed that a combination of peptide-xylose-cysteine resulted in MRPs with more dark-brown color and less amino acid concentration than the other MRPs. These MRPs also exhibited pleasant mouthfeel and taste continuity with a more intense umami taste and meat-like favor than the others. Similar results were obtained by adding cysteine, methionine, and thiamine to sesame seed hydrolysates (SSH) on MRPs composition and sensory quality. Sulfurcontaining MRPs indicated lower bitterness and stronger caramel and meat favors than SSH-MRPs due to the lower concentration of bitter amino acids and higher contents of furan and sulfur compounds, respectively (Shen et al., [2021\)](#page-41-27). Pyrazines, especially 2,6-dimethylpyrazine, mainly generated via Maillard reaction and Strecker degradation, impart nutty, toasted, roasted, and burnt aromas to roasted peony seed oil (Jin et al., [2019](#page-38-17)). It has been reported that alkyl-pyrazines (e.g., 2,3-diethyl-5-methylpyrazine, 2-ethyl-3,6-dimethylpyrazine, and 2-ethyl-3,5-dimethylpyrazine) and Strecker aldehydes (such as methional) considerably contributed to the baked favor of potato products (Kocadağlı et al., [2021](#page-38-15)). Nevertheless, the formation of alkylpyrazines and Strecker aldehydes during the Maillard reaction has signifcantly been correlated with acrylamide formation (Elmore et al., [2013;](#page-36-28) Kocadağlı et al., [2021](#page-38-15)). Table [8](#page-17-0) illustrates examples of favor production by alkylamino acids and sugars (Maillard reaction) in a solution at 100 °C based on the fndings of (Mabrouk, [1979\)](#page-39-19).

Biogenic amines, low molecular weight organic bases, are substantial toxicants in many foodstuffs. They are used as criteria for quality control of food products, as they can be responsible for favor variations. Bas may also be involved in the Maillard reaction (Pereira et al., [2015](#page-41-28)). High concentrations of biogenic amines can be found in fermented, aged, putrid, and spoiled food products. Biologically active amines form the generic and specifc taste of mature fruit-vegetable and are precursors of several flavor compounds (Silva, [2005](#page-42-23)). (Palacios, [2006](#page-40-23)) demonstrated that cadaverine and putrescine could reduce the value of wine favor by contributing to rotten and putrefed meat favors, respectively. High histamine concentrations can be accumulated in fsh before any signs of spoilage are noticed, such as an undesirable smell or taste. Scombroid poisoning, also named histamine toxication, is a typical food poisoning related to eating spoiled histamine-rich fish. The symptoms of scombroid poisoning are variable and include a peppery or metallic taste, burning in the lips, tongue, mouth, and throat, thirst, headache and dizziness, weak pulse (low blood pressure), palpitation, difficulty swallowing, abdominal pain, vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, and allergic signs, e.g., rash, hives, facial swelling, and fushing (Brock et al., [2021;](#page-35-24) Grattan et al., [2021\)](#page-37-24). The odor known as "amine/ammoniacal" in meat and meat products has been developed by cadaverine, putrescine, dimethylamine, and trimethylamine (Zhou et al., [2022a\)](#page-43-28). It has been illustrated that putrescine and cadaverine are responsible for developing putrid and fecal off-flavors in foodstuffs. These unpleasant smells are

<span id="page-17-0"></span>**Table 8** Flavors created through the thermal processing of amino acids and sugars

Amino acid	Dihydroxyacetone	Glucose	<b>Fructose</b>	<b>Maltose</b>	Sucrose
Glycine	Baked potato	Caramelized sugar, faint beer	Unpleasant caramel smell	Weak	Objectionable week NH <sub>2</sub>
Methionine	Baked potato	Overcooked sweet potato	Objectionable chopped cabbage	Over cooked cabbage	Unpleasant burned wood
Glutamic acid	Chicken broth	Old wood, pleasant	Too week	Too week	Pleasant caramel
Lysine	Strong dark com syrup	Backed sweet potato	Objectionable fried butter	Unpleasant wet wood	Rotten wet potato
Phenylalanine	Very strong, hyacinth	Rancid caramel, unpleasant violets	Stinging smell, very objec- tionable	Pleasant sweet caramel	Unpleasant sweet caramel

associated with the sensory specifcations of ammonia and manure, respectively (Westling et al., [2016](#page-43-29)). Besides, histamine induces pungent off-flavor, and phenylethylamine contributes to fishy off-flavor (Mohammadi et al., [2021](#page-40-18)). Those cheeses, which are quickly matured and have a strong flavor, can contain notable amounts of aromatic biogenic amines. (Andic et al., [2010\)](#page-35-25) reported that tyramine is the principal biogenic amine in Van Herbed cheese. In contrast, (Qureshi et al., [2013](#page-41-29)) indicated that Gama lost cheese, a native Norwegian mold-ripened cheese, contained a signifcantly higher putrescine content (11 to 25 mg. $kg^{-1}$ ). The biogenic amines, especially cadaverine, and some amino acids may contribute to the distinct bitter taste of Camembert cheese (Westling et al., [2016](#page-43-29)).

As mentioned, several food contaminants may be produced during food manufacturing operations. Various toxicants are formed in diferent processes primarily due to existing components, internal and external factors, processing conditions, and packaging technologies. They afect the food quality characteristics such as appearance and favor and negatively impact consumers' health by causing harmful consequences. Table [9](#page-19-0) summarizes the formation conditions of signifcant and prevalent food processing contaminants and the sensory characteristics in food matrices (updated from (Ragavan et al., [2017](#page-41-30)).

### **Toxicological profling of PITs**

Food PITs are thought to pose a serious risk to human health and can have a number of negative consequences. A few of these contaminants are really dangerous. Acute poisoning with mild to severe efects and even death are possible health outcomes. Long-term adverse health consequences include mutations in DNA, increased risk of cancer, and mutagenic activity. Acrylamide's DNAadduction and mutagenic qualities have been shown in a few in vitro and i*n vivo* investigations (Besaratinia et al., [2005](#page-35-26), [2007](#page-35-27); Koyama et al., [2011](#page-38-24); Vikström et al., [2011](#page-42-24)). Acrolein has been shown to have negative impacts on people by several researches. It can result in DNA adducts, reproduction, carcinogenicity, and protein-DNA crosslinking (Abraham et al., [2011;](#page-35-28) Minko et al., [2008](#page-39-20)). The Maillard reaction products, like HMF and acrylamide, have also indicated some adverse consequences on the human body (Stadler et al., [2008\)](#page-42-0). The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifed furan as an animal carcinogen and a possible human carcinogen (Bakhiya et al., [2010](#page-35-29)). Toxicity studies on HMF and its metabolite, 5-sulphooxymethylfurfural (SMF), have shown serositis of peritoneal tissues and hepatotoxic efects (Bauer-Marinovic et al., [2012](#page-35-30)). In vivo studies on individual PAHs (mainly on BaP) have shown various toxicological efects, such as hematological efects, reproductive and developmental toxicity, immunotoxicity, carcinogenicity, and genotoxicity (DNA-damaging) of these compounds. In 2012, BaP was concluded as a human carcinogen by IARC (FSAI, [2015](#page-37-25)). Moreover, food exposure to elevated temperatures may lead to considerable changes in the food matrix, such as the pyrolysis of amino acid constituents, a process related to signifcant health issues. A summary of the health risks and toxicities of food PITs is presented in Table [10](#page-21-0).

#### **Analytical methods to detection of PITs**

As analytical methodologies increase in sensitivity allowing the detection and determination of process toxicants formed during food processing, an increasing number of significant issues will arise as well. The analytical instrumentation required for sensitive detection and accurate determination (about micro and nanoscale) of these toxicants will become more costly and prohibitively in so many cases. For example, this has been encountered in the case of acrylamide for which the preferred analytical procedures for determining the content in foods involve gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC/ MS) or mass spectrometry combined with other techniques such as liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (LC–MS/MS) (Wenzl et al., [2008](#page-43-30)). Nevertheless, accurate measurements of these toxicants in diferent food products are critical for establishing the relations between diet and health. Several analytical techniques have been developed to measure the toxicants which can be produced in food during processing. For instance, for determination of benzene and other volatile organic compounds in food products, the most predominant approaches are the static and dynamic purge and trap headspace coupled to gas chromatography–mass spectrometry or GC/fame ionization detection (FID). A summary of the analytical techniques employed for the determination of process-induced toxicants in food products is presented in Table [11.](#page-25-0)

# **Risk assessment of PITs**

Risk assessments for food safety are methodical analyses of possible risks related to food items or additives. These evaluations seek to pinpoint and examine health hazards to people that may arise from things like dangerous germs, chemical pollutants, or other chemicals (EFSA, [2010](#page-36-29)). Information about the consumption of pertinent foods and the amounts of the chemical of interest in those foods are needed to estimate dietary intakes of food contaminants. The direct screening of human organs and bodily fuids has become a more popular method of determining exposure in recent years. Accurate food intake measurements are necessary for exposure evaluations that gauge the concentrations of



<span id="page-19-0"></span>



<span id="page-21-0"></span>

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<span id="page-25-0"></span>





Table 11 (continued)







chemical substances in meals. For the purpose of evaluating exposure, especially by sensitive populations, comprehensive food consumption statistics for both the median and average consumer as well as for various demographic groups are essential. Furthermore, comparable diet statistics are necessary for the development of an international risk assessment approach to food safety, especially with regard to staple foods from various parts of the world (Joint et al., [1995](#page-38-31)). Based on hazard identifcation, hazard characterization, and exposure assessment, risk characterization seeks to offer a qualitative and/or quantitative evaluation of the likelihood and severity of known or anticipated adverse health consequences in a particular population. The risk characterization step determines the health risks for chemicals that are assumed to have a threshold of toxicity by comparing people's exposure, determined by structured approaches using deterministic or probabilistic methods, with the acceptable daily intake (ADI), tolerable daily intake (TDI), and estimated daily intake (EDI). The resultant distribution of exposure assessments is then compared with health-base recommendation values based on the toxicological profile of the chemical of interest. This allows a probabilistic description of the risk of exceeding these levels (Ingenbleek et al., [2020](#page-38-32)). The US/EPA's probabilistic risk assessment methodology was used to estimate daily PIT consumption and calculate cancer (Incremental Lifetime Cancer Risk, or ILCR) and noncancer hazards (Target Hazard Quotient, or THQ) in order to assess health risk. A comprehensive diet research strategy, focused surveys, or monitoring programs can all produce occurrence data for pollutants and residues. Because focused surveys and monitoring programs often concentrate on foodstufs that are anticipated to contain the substance of interest, the results are not indicative of levels in food as a whole. Analyses of meals prepared for ingestion and combined into composite samples provide the foundation of whole diet research (Benford, [2013](#page-35-38)). PITs contaminants are a broad category of substances that are combined when food is being produced. These may result in market regulation and have a negative efect on health. These chemicals will almost always form; it only depends on the particular procedure and components. The amount of the identification in food items, tracking or maximum limits, non-carcinogenic and carcinogenic adverse efects, and suggestions to reduce the risk vary depending on the a hazardous substance. Studies have indicated that pregnant women across various age groups and trimesters may have major health complications due to dietary acrylamide exposure, including an increased risk of carcinoma. Foodstufs were graded in order of how much they contributed to the average exposure to acrylamide: French fries comes frst, then bread and coffee. Other than coffee, acrylamide intake from bread and French fries carries a high potential for cancer. According to these results, pregnant women should abstain from high-acrylamide foods such fried potatoes, bread, and coffee for the sake of their unborn children's health (Pekmezci et al., [2024](#page-41-38)). To determine how much furan and its methyl derivatives—2-methylfuran, 3-methylfuran, and 2,5-dimethylfuran / 2-ethylfuran—found in common meals exposed newborns and toddlers, a research was carried out. To calculate the health hazards associated with risk, the margin of exposure (MoE) was utilized. The examined samples had concentrations of furan and its derivatives of 10 and 80.3 μg/kg, respectively. The danger connected to consuming the examined substances in both age groups is shown by the MoEs for neoplastic efects in the majority of fctitious situations. MoEs for non-neoplastic efects show the possible risk for signifcant exposure (95th %) with 3-methylfuran and Σ2,5-dimethylfuran/2-ethylfuran (Minorczyk et al., [2023](#page-39-28)). According to the evaluation of EC's health risks in Serbian fruit spirits, it was found in 40% of the analyzed samples and was statistically greater in stone fruit spirits. Men accounted for 49 and 98% of the samples with MoE values below the limit at average and chronic excessive use, respectively, whereas women accounted for 19 and 96% of the samples with MoE values over the limit. In contrast to ILCR based on essentially safe dosage, which revealed 25 and 69% of the samples posing a risk to women's and men's health, respectively, cancer risk approach based on the oral slope factor suggested risk concern for 96% of the samples at average intake, independent of gender. It is important to think about taking precautions during the manufacturing of spirits and regulating EC legally (Kusonić et al., [2023\)](#page-38-33). A research evaluated the possible health concerns linked to newborns' and young children's food exposure to perchlorate and chlorate, which are included in baby formulae sold in China. Infant formulae had detection rates of 46 and 98.7% for perchlorate and chlorate, respectively, with mean levels of 9.98 and 112.01 μg/kg and highest values of 151 and 1475 μg/ kg. The average and 95th % values of the daily exposure to perchlorate for infants and young children aged 0–36 months who were fed baby formulae were 0.07 and  $0.17 \mu$ g/kg bw daily, respectively. These values were less than the TDI of perchlorate, which is 0.3 μg/kg bw daily. The TDI of  $3 \mu g/kg$  bw per day for chlorate was exceeded by the mean and P95 values of 0.83 and 1.89 μg/kg bw per day of exposure to chlorate through baby formulae in 0–36-month-old babies and young children. The TDI of perchlorate and chlorate in baby formulae was not exceeded by the P95 exposure of newborns and young children in the 0–6 months, 7–12 months, and 13–36 months age groups. As a result, Shanghai

considers the risk of exposing newborns and young children aged 0 to 36 months to perchlorate and chlorate from baby formulae to be acceptable (Yu et al., [2024](#page-43-35)). The research project assessed possible adverse efects that Iranian consumers could face from oral exposure to 3-MCPD through chocolate eating. Results indicated a highly signifcant relationship between the kind of chocolate and the 3-MCPD level. Based on the estimated noncarcinogeic scenario, there is no risk to consumers' health from consuming such samples because the Hazard Indices (HI) in the probabilistic technique were less than 1. For the local and imported products with less than 70% cocoa, the predicted MOEs at the 50th, 80th, and 95th % showed a de minimis public health risk. However, MOEs obtained at the same three percentiles for domestic chocolates with more than 80% dark chocolate caused alarm (Taghizadeh et al., [2024\)](#page-42-35). Samples of sausages and grilled hamburgers with varying percentages of red meat were chosen for the study's HAA risk evaluation. The samples of sausages and hamburgers had HAAs ranging from 35.9 to 2050 ng/g and 59.5 to 1530 ng/g, respectively. For the whole study population, low and high daily intake of IQ, MeIQ, and MeIQx by hamburger consumption were determined at 21.9 and 2856.5 ng/day per capita, respectively. For sausage consumers, the HAA daily consumption in a favorable scenario (5th %) is 22.8 ng/capita, whereas in an unfavorable scenario (95th %), it was 3990 ng/day per capita. The findings demonstrated that, across all age categories, male population exposure to HAAs was greater than that of female population. Furthermore, aging increased the quantity of chronic daily intake (CDI) of HAAs (Mohammadi et al., [2023a](#page-40-30)). Benzene was detected in eighty-eight liquid herbal food supplements that were gathered in Serbia. It was determined that 41.2% of supplements preserved with benzoate (0.9–  $51.7 \mu g/kg$ ) contained benzene. There was no evidence of any health issue associated with benzoene exposure: estimations of ILCR did not approach one more cancer case per 100,000 people; maximum THQ varied from 0.39% (for toddlers) to 0.84% (for adolescents); minimum MoE were between 35,680 (for adolescents) to 77,419 (for toddlers). Nonetheless, steps to lessen the amount of benzene in food should be taken (Vojvodić et al., [2023](#page-42-36)). A scientifc opinion on the hazards to the nation's health associated with N-nitrosamines in food was requested from EFSA. The potential risk evaluation was limited to the ten carcinogenic *N*-nitrosamines (NDMA, NMEA, NDEA, NDPA, NDBA, NMA, NSAR, NMOR, NPIP, and NPYR) that are found in foodstuffs. The daily exposure to *N*-nitrosamines varied between 0 and 208.9 ng/kg bw across diferent age groups, circumstances, and investigations. The primary dietary group that increases the risk of cancer-causing *N*-nitrosamine exposure is animalbased foods. With the exception of certain baby studies where the P95 exposure was nil, MoEs ranged from 3,337 to 48 at the 95th % exposure. The MoE for carcinomacausing N-nitrosamines at the 95th % exposure is very probable (98–100% certain) to be fewer than 10,000 for all age categories, according to the CONTAM Panel's conclusion, which highlights health concerns (Chain et al., [2023](#page-36-35)). Eight polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons chemicals were found in both raw and processed marine products in South Korea, according to the results of the research. With a concentration of  $14.22 \mu g/kg$ , dried bonito fake, or katsuobushi, showed the highest amount of benzo[a]pyrene, above the 5.0  $\mu$ g/kg regulatory limit set by the European Commission. In katsuobushi, the total concentration of PAH8 was 220.5 µg/kg. Chrysene was the most common PAH8 congener in all marine goods, with shellfsh having the greatest detection rate (70%), followed by fsh (19%) and crustacea (8%). Shellfsh mostly included petrogenic PAHs from the aquatic environment, whereas grilled fsh mostly contained pyrogenic PAHs from combustion leftovers. The methods of grilling, smoking, and drying all had a major role in the production of PAH8 in various food products. The population of South Korea is thought to be less concerned about being exposed to PAH8 from marine products based on the fndings of a risk assessment conducted utilizing a MoE method through a whole diet research (Paik et al., [2024\)](#page-40-31). The 5-HMF level of common bread varieties in Turkey was found. The samples' 5-HMF concentrations varied from  $3.50$  to  $120$  mg/kg. The white, semiindustrial and traditional bread categories had the highest 5-HMF values. Males and females between the ages of 15 and 18 had greater 5-HMF exposure levels than those in other age groups. When 5-HMF exposure was taken into account, the THQ readings revealed a comparatively large health concern (Basaran et al., [2022](#page-35-39)). In Morocco, a histamine risk assessment was carried out for several fshing categories of products. When compared to fresh fsh, the projected dangers of consuming canned, semi-preserved, and frozen fsh are smaller. Sardine has the highest risk, scoring 35, which translates to 39 cases annually. When control measures are implemented, the score drops to 20 (or one patient year), representing an anticipated 38 patient reduction annually. For frozen fsh, the hazards score ranges from zero (one patient for a millennium) to eleven (three patients for a millennium). It goes from 0 to 21 for fsh that has been semi-preserved. The risk score for canned fish ranges from 12 (fve patients over a millennium) to 21 (15 patients over a century). The majority of Moroccan fish items are therefore categorized as "low risk" (Hariri et al., [2018](#page-37-36)).

# **Food matrices impacts on PITs**

As might be assumed, the primary chemical reactions that occur during food processing involve the principal food components: proteins, lipids, carbs, and vitamins. These substances can react with one another as well as with diferent food additives such nitrites, sulphite, alde-hydes, and alkali (Alcolado et al., [2023](#page-35-40)). This can result in food items having less nutritional value, producing odors and browning that is either desired or unwanted, and very rarely, producing dangerous substances.

As the most reactive food ingredient, proteins can react with fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, polyphenols, and a variety of chemical substances. The most significant and well researched response is perhaps the Maillard reaction that occurs when protein and reducing sugars interact (Kathuria et al., [2023\)](#page-38-34). Early Maillard reactions involve the primary combination of reducing sugars and the essential amino acid lysine, resulting in the formation of a biologically unavailable deoxyketosyl substance. This reaction is crucial for dairy products, as they can lose a signifcant amount of their lysine content without any noticeable color changes during processing and storage (Xiang et al., [2021a\)](#page-43-36). Brown pigments result from later Maillard reactions, which also lessen nutritional value and produce a variety of pleasant favors and aromas. These reactions have been linked, at least in part, to the favors and aromas of freshly baked products, coffee, cocoa, beer, cooked meats and vegetables (Hedegaard et al., [2013](#page-37-37)). Four primary types of Maillard tastes have been identifed; the most signifcant of these are the cyclic enolones, which provide caramel favors, and the *N*-heterocyclics, which produce roasted, nutty, and baked flavors (Taylor et al., [2002\)](#page-42-37). The breakdown of several vitamins, the interactions between lipids and alkali and proteins, and some fndings from studies on the interactions between proteins and formaldehyde and polyphenols were also discovered earlier (Hurrell, [1980\)](#page-38-35). Foods include a large variety of naturally occurring and useful components called polyphenols. Proteins are bound by polyphenols, which then react with carbonyl chemicals. Polyphenol-protein binding modifes the structure and function of proteins. Maillard reactions are inhibited by reactions with carbonyl molecules (Lund, [2021](#page-39-29)).

When it comes to fat reactions, heated fat goes through three main types of reactions: polymerization, oxidation, and hydrolysis. Once hydrolysis occurs, free fatty acids are formed, and when these acids are present in enough quantities, they can signifcantly alter the oil's flavor. Hydroperoxides are produced during oxidation, and these hydroperoxides can subsequently be heated to produce secondary oxidation products such keto acids, hydroxy acids, epoxy acids, and carbonyl compounds like formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, acrolein, and EC. The creation of crosslinks, either by oxidation products or carbon–carbon bonds through additional heating in the absence of oxygen, is the cause of polymerization (Ayala et al., [2014](#page-35-41)). Nonetheless, it is beyond dispute that, under certain circumstances, fat can serve as a source of hazardous substances. Additionally, fats and their oxidation byproducts have the potential to degrade other food components, including proteins, heme pigments, and fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, and E) (Mohan et al., [2022](#page-40-32)). Foods include oilseeds, fshmeal, and frozen or dried fsh can all have interactions between proteins and lipids. It appears that signifcant protein degradation may occur before meals that have experienced severe lipid oxidation are deemed unsatisfactory from an organoleptic perspective (Hurrell, [1980](#page-38-35)).

Foods high in fatty acids that have been thermally treated can produce lipid oxidation products, which may be detrimental to human health (Zhuang et al., [2022](#page-44-1)). Fatty acids in oils and fats degrade due to a process called lipid peroxidation, which is autocatalytic and occurs in the presence of free radicals and molecular oxygen. For many foods that include fats and oils, this process is the main cause of degradation, which results in losses of quality and nutrients. Many secondary lipid peroxidation products, including alkanals, alkenals, alkadienals, and hydroxyalkenals, are produced when fatty acids is oxida-tively degraded (Yin et al., [2020](#page-43-37)). Oxidation and breakdown of ω-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), such as linoleic acid and arachidonic acid, can produce 4-hydroxynonenal (4-HNE) by enzymatic or non-enzymatic pathways (Liao et al., [2020](#page-39-30)). 4-HNE can be produced during the heating of oils and integrated into fried meat and skin samples throughout the cooking process. If 4-HNE, a hazardous aldehyde, is ingested with food over an extended period of time, it may be linked to a variety of medical issues (Ma et al., [2020](#page-39-31); Steppeler et al., [2016\)](#page-42-38).

The Maillard reaction is known to be highly dependent on the reaction circumstances and to happen more frequently at higher temperatures, in alkaline environments, and with a moisture level of around 15%. While only reducing sugars among carbohydrates possess the required carbonyl groups to participate in the reactions, non-reducing sugars like sucrose can hydrolyze into reducing sugars like glucose and fructose when baking biscuits or roasting peanuts. There are also significant diferences in the reactivity of the various reducing sugars (Pang et al., [2021](#page-40-33)). It was shown that specialized milk powders for lactose-intolerant newborns were much more vulnerable to Maillard reactions during preservation than regular milk powders when the lactose in the milk was hydrolyzed to glucose and galactose. The lactose-hydrolyzed sample, maintained at 25 °C and 0.62 activity of water, showed a signifcant decrease

in chemically reactive lysine in the frst month, but the usual milk powder showed a 20% decline after 9 months. Similarly, it has been shown that extra caution needs to be used when spray-drying lactose-hydrolyzed milks or unique baby formulae that include glucose rather than lactose, since the standard process caused blocks half of the lysine (Pischetsrieder et al., [2012;](#page-41-39) Xiang et al., [2021b\)](#page-43-38).

Chemical additives to food may be detrimental which include alkali, nitrites, and sulphites. Thiamin may be destroyed by sulphites and alkali, and nitrosamines, which are very carcinogenic, can be created when amines such the amino acid proline combine with nitrites (Drabik-Markiewicz et al., [2009](#page-36-36)). In food technology, alkali-treated food proteins are now widely used to produce functional proteins with the required stabilizing, foaming, and emulsifying properties, protein isolates, and solutions that are appropriate for protein fiber spinning. The development of a toxic component in the protein as a result of alkali treatment was identifed as the cause of a distinct type of histopathological lesion observed in the kidneys of rats fed industrial grade soy protein. This was subsequently discovered to be due to lysinoalanine generated by adding the ε-amino lysine residue to the double-bonded form of dehydroalanine created by cystine or serine breakdown. While free lysinoalanine can be harmful to the kidneys, most researchers showed that alkalitreated proteins with high lysinoalanine levels have no negative efects, possibly with the exception of reducing lysine availability and protein digestibility (Sarwar Gilani et al., [2012\)](#page-41-40). In reality, home cooking processes produce lysinoalanine in egg whites and a few other products (Zhao et al., [2015](#page-43-39)). In Latin America, alkali-treating corn has been done for generations, and it has the beneft of releasing nicotinic acid from its bound form, which helps against pellagra symptoms (Harper et al., [1958\)](#page-37-38).

# **Ultra‑processed foods and adverse health efects**

According to the Nova food categorization system, a wide variety of ready-to-eat goods are classifed as ultraprocessed foods (UPF), including packaged snacks, carbonated soft beverages, instant noodles, and ready-made meals (Monteiro et al., [2019a\)](#page-40-34). The products mentioned are defned as industrial mixes made mostly of chemicals that have been chemically altered and removed from food, plus favorings, textures, colors, and additives for added durability and minimum to no inclusion of entire foodstufs (Monteiro et al., [2019b\)](#page-40-35).

Prior to consumption, UPF undergoes a variety of multidirectional procedures and alterations. Each product has a substantial quantity of additional sugar, salt, saturated fat, and other additives (Gramza-Michałowska, [2020](#page-37-39)). According to its defnition, UPF is the end product of several processing steps taken to create a formulation mostly made of inexpensive energy, nutrients, and carefully chosen additives, with the least amount of wholefoods (Monteiro et al., [2018](#page-40-36)). Various research' fndings provide credence to the idea that the world's food supply's bias toward UPFs might help to partially explain rising trends in the prevalence of chronic non-communicable illnesses and an overall greater risk of death (Fiolet et al., [2018;](#page-36-37) Mendonça et al., [2016,](#page-39-32) [2017](#page-39-33)). It has been established that regular UPF intake raises the amount of free sugars, carbs, saturated and total fats, and salt in the diet, raising the risk of a number of diet-related illnesses. Additionally, it should be noted that a strong negative linear association between the amount of protein, dietary fber, and minerals in the diet and the composition of UPFs was discovered (Rauber et al., [2018\)](#page-41-41).

The unfavorable health consequences linked to UPFs could not be entirely explained by the nutrients they contain or their energy density; rather, physical and chemical characteristics of the industrial processing techniques, materials, and byproducts may also play a role. First of all, changes made to the food matrix during intense processing, commonly referred to as dietary reconstitution, may have an impact on satiety, digestion, and nutrient absorption (Fardet, [2016](#page-36-38)). Second, there is growing fndings in humans that adverse health effects are associated with exposure to additives, such as emulsifers, colorants, nonsugar sweeteners, nitrates and nitrites (Lane et al., [2024](#page-38-36)). Third, extensive industrial food processing can result in the production of potentially hazardous compounds such as acrolein, acrylamide, furans, HAAs, industrial transfatty acids, and PAHs, which have been connected to increased risks of chronic infammatory disorders (Mar-tínez Steele et al., [2023;](#page-39-34) Srour et al., [2022](#page-42-39)). Lastly, pollutants including phthalates, mineral oils, microplastics, and bisphenols that can have an adverse effect on health can fnd their way into UPFs (Srour et al., [2022\)](#page-42-39).

# **Emerging green non‑thermal technologies on PITs**

Non-thermal techniques, which prevent nutritional breakdown, side hazardous reactions, and changes in mechanical and physical qualities, are becoming more and more important as new green technologies to supplement or replace existing manufacturing processes. The term "novel processes" refers to the following: irradiation, oscillating magnetic felds (OMF), ultrasound (US), ohmic heating (OH), superheated steam, ultrafltration, supercritical carbon dioxide, antimicrobial agents, biological treatment, atmospheric cold plasma (ACP) and corona discharge plasma jet (CDPJ), high hydrostatic pressure (HHP), pulsed electric felds (PEF), pulsed light (PL), and so on (Mirza Alizadeh et al., [2021a](#page-39-35)).

With a focus on oil absorption and acrylamide generation, the study examined the efects of 60 kV ACP pretreatment on potato strip properties before and after frying for varied lengths of time (5, 10, and 15 min). Potato samples that were given a cap had noticeably improved physicochemical properties. By destroying asparagine and deactivating amylase, ACP signifcantly decreased the synthesis of acrylamide during frying. After 14 days, ACP changed the color of the strip, making it brighter and less red and yellow (Nateghi et al., [2024](#page-40-37)). Additionally, research was carried out by CDPJ to decrease the BaP and AA contents in roasted cofee beans. The roasted beans' initial amounts of BaP and AA were reduced by 53.6 and 32.0%, respectively, after 60 min of CDPJ treatment (powered by 20 kV DC/1.5 A). Signifcant changes were seen in the quantity overall phenolic compounds and the Agtron color indexes (Lee et al., [2020](#page-39-36)).

In the food sector, cutting back on AA is crucial. There are ways to remove AA once it has formed, but there are also ways to prevent AA from forming in the frst place, such as by removing its precursors or interfering with the Maillard process. Combining established practices with cutting-edge approaches, such as employing asparaginase in conjunction with the blanching procedure (a traditional method) is more efective than applying it alone for AA reduction. The major impacts of this response on the pleasant sensory features of heated meals are that mitigation strategies afecting the MR may have a detrimental impact on color and taste. Reducing AA in food items without compromising end product qualities and features is a vital problem for the food industry, as MR is a precursor to the production of distinct and desirable flavor and color in food products. Thus, one unique tactic to lessen worries about the sensory qualities of cooked food is to employ developing technology (Nematollahi et al., [2021](#page-40-38)).

The investigation into the ultrasonic degradation of naphthalene, phenanthrene, and pyrene at three distinct, relatively high frequencies revealed that phenanthrene degrades to concentrations less than our experimental detection limit, which is less than  $1 \mu g/L$ , for all three frequencies and power inputs≥133 W. At 582 kHz, phenanthrene breaks down much more quickly than it does at 862 and 1142 kHz. The rates of degradation per unit mass for naphthalene, phenanthrene, and pyrene are similar for all three frequencies, although lower for the former. Moreover, under the same conditions, naphthalene degrades with less energy than phenanthrene, which in turn takes less energy than pyrene (Manariotis et al., [2011](#page-39-37)).

The study assesses the amount of BAs present during the ripening process of ovine and bovine cheeses made from milk that has been homogenized at 100 MPa prior to cheese making. The findings demonstrated that the kind of milk used for cheese-making and the treatment given to the raw materials had a substantial impact on both the microbial ecology and the BAs concentrations of cheeses throughout ripening. Specifcally, the counts of microorganisms in Caciotta revealed that the high pressure homogenization (HPH) of milk considerably decreased the amount of lactobacilli, yeasts, and Micrococcaceae at the end of ripening. However, the HPH administration to milk promoted the growth of yeasts in the cheese from cows. Additionally, compared to bovine cheeses, the ovine cheeses exhibited a much greater buildup of BA. Nonetheless, at the conclusion of ripening, the HPH treatment of milk was able to signifcantly lower the biogenic amine contents in both cheese typologies (Lanciotti et al., [2007](#page-38-37)).

In order to remove carcinogenic and mutagenic compounds from food, biological approaches are now showing promise as alternatives to physical and chemical detoxifcation techniques. Biological decontamination procedures using lactic acid bacteria (LAB) and probiotics have gained attention recently as a novel, environmentally friendly way to reduce the contamination of food with PAHs (Mirza Alizadeh et al., [2021b](#page-39-38), [2022\)](#page-39-39). Numerous academic publications have also discussed the processes underlying the deactivation of food-borne carcinogens' toxicity, particularly that of AA and PAHs (Khorshidian et al., [2020](#page-38-38); Yousefi et al., [2019\)](#page-43-40). The process of PITs breakdown involves the following steps: the conversion of organic and stable carcinogens into less toxic degradable hydrophilic metabolites; activation of antioxidative enzymes such as oxidase, manganese peroxidases, lipases, etc.; and, most importantly, the binding of heat-generated cancer-causing chemicals to the cell wall and peptidoglycans of these bacterial cells, which may eliminate them scientifically (Das et al.,  $2023$ ). One possible strategy to lower the amount of BAs in food is to use adjunct cultures that are able to digest BAs. *Bacillus subtilis* DEPE IB1, isolated from gouda-type cheese, has been used in studies to reduce the content of BAs including histamine, tyramine, phenylethylamine, putrescine, and cadaverine in food items. During the culture period, the concentration of the evaluated BAs decreased due to the combined efects of the cultivation temperature (8, 23, and 30 °C) and the starting pH of the medium (5 to 8) under both aerobic and anaerobic circumstances. The starting pH of the medium and the culture temperature had a substantial impact on the breakdown process of biogenic amines by *Bacillus subtilis*. At the conclusion of the culture, 65–85% of the detected BAs were drastically decreased in concentration (Butor et al., [2023\)](#page-35-42).

# **Conclusion**

Thermal processing provides cooked and delicious taste and tempting aroma notes to foodstuf. In the food and beverage processing industries, organoleptic characteristics, including flavor (taste and aroma), texture, and appearance, play a critical role in the appreciation of food products. Food off-flavors or taints are caused by undesirable compounds generated via microbial or chemical reactions through processing, storage, or transportation. Off-flavors are emerging problems of many food products and are often associated with the presence of toxic substances. Some of the desirable processed food favors can also be related to the production of dangerous and carcinogenic toxins. PITs formed during food processing have health risks to humans; however, they are preventable through various procedures if the causes are known. Most food PITs are formed due to employing high temperatures or long-time heating during food preparation and processing. Therefore, avoiding overheating foods or exploiting non-thermal food processes like steaming, ultrasound, cold plasma, pulsed electric feld, pulsed light, high-pressure processing, and radiation will probably decrease PITs formation. Controlling or limiting the precursors of these toxicants can also be benefcial. For example, acrylamide formation in foods such as potato and cereal products can be restricted by decreasing the content of reducing sugars (e.g., glucose and fructose) and free amino acids (asparagine). Alternatively, reducing ascorbic and benzoic acid levels can efficiently diminish benzene formation and PITs concentrations in the fnal food product. Furthermore, managing dietary exposure to these contaminants can signifcantly restrict their levels and following toxic efects in humans. Foods that have undergone extensive processing (ultra-processed foods) are directly associated with a number of detrimental health outcomes, such as an increased risk of heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, poor mental health, an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, and early mortality. In this regard, avoiding over-fried, burnt, and stuck-on foods of pots and pans, limiting the consumption of smoked foods and ready-to-eat products, and cooking food in an appropriate portion quantity might be benefcial for decreasing PIT intake. Apart from the aforementioned aspects, in response to new concerns about food safety, creative and cutting-edge analytical technique methods are being created. These techniques may yield extremely precise and sensitive fndings, which makes them an invaluable tool for quality and safety assurance of food. These include testing for desired nutrients or favor components, keeping an eye out for unwanted residues, pollutants, or by-products, verifying the validity of ingredients, and evaluating recipes or additive composition in the final product. Thus, it's critical to evaluate these toxins in processed food using precise and sensitive techniques.

#### **Supplementary Information**

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Additional fle 1

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#### **Authors' contributions**

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#### **Competing interests**

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