Applying deconstructed sourdough communities and fermentation parameters to low-FODMAP wheat bread production

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Short running head: Low-FODMAP bread-making with sourdough techniques

Abstract

Despite being made with the same starting materials, standard and sourdough bread differ in terms of levels of fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols (FODMAPs). This study aims to assess the impact of a selected yeast-bacteria co-culture isolated from sourdough starters in conjunction with varying bread-making process parameters on bread FODMAP content and overall quality. A survey of the microbial composition of sourdough starters found that many contain *Maudiozyma humilis* and *Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*. A selected pairing was used for small-scale bread-making, and dough fermentation and bread quality parameters were assessed. The sourdough microbes exerted distinctive effects on dough gassing capacity and FODMAP composition in comparison to baker's yeast. To meet low-FODMAP cutoff values, the presence of a fermenting yeast and an extended dough fermentation time (> 6 h) were necessary. Sensory panellists preferred the sourdough co-culture bread fermented for 24 h over the 6 h treatment, and detected more complex aromas in the former. An extended, low-temperature dough fermentation regimen can be used to produce low-FODMAP bread with standard bread-making materials, and the use of sourdough fermentation microbes confers distinct textural and organoleptic properties.

Keywords: FODMAPs, bread, wheat, sourdough, *Maudiozyma humilis*, *Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*

Introduction

Wheat bread is an important and widely consumed staple food of the Western diet. It is a good source of energy, dietary fibre, and micronutrients [1], while also being convenient and well-liked. However, certain wheat-based products are unsuitable for consumption by people with functional gastrointestinal disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) because they are often rich in fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols (FODMAPs).

Common examples of FODMAPs include fructans, α-galactooligosaccharides, lactose, fructose in excess of glucose, and polyols, and they are found in a broad range of food groups in addition to cereal-based products [2, 3]. These carbohydrates are not properly absorbed in the small intestine, leading to the production of gas and short-chain fatty acids in the large intestine by the gut microbiota. For this reason, many FODMAPs are also considered to be dietary fibres [4], but in IBS sufferers these properties lead to adverse gastrointestinal symptoms including abdominal pain, diarrhoea, flatulence, and bloating. Furthermore, certain FODMAPs attract water via osmotic activity, which can lead to luminal distention [5].

The major FODMAP present in wheat bread is fructans (**Figure 1**), which are β (2→1) and/or β (2→6) fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS) containing a single glucose moiety [6]. Fructan concentrations range from 0.6 to 2.9% in wholewheat flour [7], and 1.4 to 1.7% in white wheat flour [8]. The average degree of polymerisation (DP_{av}) is 4, with a maximum of 14-19 [8]. Fructans derived from grain products are branched and categorised as graminan-type [2, 9]. Other FODMAPs present in wheat bread in smaller quantities can include raffinose, tri- and tetra-fructo-oligosaccharides (e.g., nystose, kestose), excess fructose, and mannitol [10].

Put figure 1 here

A diet low in FODMAPs is a proven therapeutic measure to reduce or eliminate IBS symptoms in those with functional gastro-intestinal disorders [11], but the exclusion of wheat bread from the diet is not ideal due to its staple food status and the non-FODMAP fibres and micronutrients it provides. Bread can be considered low-FODMAP, however, if in a serving of bread (50 g) the following cutoff values are not exceeded: 0.3 g of oligosaccharides, 0.15 g of excess fructose, 0.4 g of polyols, and a total of 0.5 g of FODMAPs excluding lactose [3]. Current low-FODMAP breadmaking focuses on either enzymatic pre-treatment of flour to remove FODMAPs, or the use of grains that are naturally low in FODMAPs, such as spelt [10]. While both options are viable, they are relatively expensive and are not as broadly accessible as conventional white wheat bread.

Conventional white wheat bread produced at commercial scales is typically leavened with baker's yeast (industrial strains of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) for a short period of time at approx. 30°C [12]. Despite the fact that baker's yeast produces invertase, an enzyme that can effect fructan hydrolysis [13], FODMAP levels in conventional, rapidly-fermented wheat bread often exceed low-FODMAP thresholds, mainly because of high fructan content (**Figure 1**).

Sourdough bread, on the other hand, while made with the same ingredients as standard bread, has a distinct and often improved FODMAP composition. Namely, its fructan content is lower, whereas levels of excess fructose and mannitol may be enriched [6]. Sourdough bread is traditionally leavened with a type I sourdough starter. This is a spontaneously-fermented mixture of flour and water that via a process of regular re-feeding with fresh ingredients (termed 'backslopping') develops a community of often non-conventional yeasts and bacteria [14, 15]. A mature sourdough typically contains one or

two yeast species and one-several bacterial species [16], which may interact with one another by

various means. One of the most common sourdough yeasts is *Maudiozyma humilis* (formerly

Kazachstania or *Candida humilis*), an ascomycetous yeast that occupies a phylogenetically close

position relative to the *Saccharomyces* genus [17–19]. This yeast is commonly isolated from

sourdough starters that also contain *Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*, an obligately

heterofermentative lactic acid bacterium (LAB) whose primary ecological niche is sourdough starters

[20, 21]. In addition to its varied microbial profile compared to conventional bread, sourdough bread

is often made according to different process parameters. Depending on the style of sourdough

production, dough proofing or fermentation can be carried out over approx. 24 h and can include

several propagation steps [22].

It is already well-understood that extending dough proofing times leads to increased degradation of

fructans in bread dough [6, 23]. However, the effects of proofing temperature on this process and its

interaction with proofing time are less well-characterised. Furthermore, while some yeasts, such as

Saccharomyces cerevisiae, *Kluyveromyces marxianus*, and *Lachancea fermentati* have been

investigated for their applicability to low-FODMAP breadmaking [1, 24], there remains a lack of

information about the potential of common sourdough microbes in this area, given the low-fructan

status of sourdough bread.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate how the functional metabolic properties of a

common sourdough yeast-bacteria pairing and the dough proofing time-temperature regime typical of

sourdough breadmaking affect bread quality and FODMAP content. An accompanying aim was to

draw comparisons between conventional and sourdough bread conditions.

Materials and Methods

Growth media preparation

For yeast strain isolation, two media were prepared. Wallerstein Nutrient (WLN) agar was prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions (Oxoid). Yeast-peptone-dextrose (YPD) agar was composed of 10 g/L yeast extract (Oxoid), 20 g/L bacteriological peptone (Oxoid), 20 g/L anhydrous D-glucose (Merck), and 20 g/L w/v bacteriological grade agar (Ajax). When used for strain isolation and viable colony enumeration, yeast growth media were supplemented with 100 μg/mL ampicillin and 30 μg/mL chloramphenicol to prevent bacterial growth.

For bacterial strain isolation, de Man, Rogosa & Sharpe (MRS) agar was prepared according to the manufacturer's specifications (Oxoid). Isolation and enumeration media were supplemented with 10 μg/mL cycloheximide to prevent fungal growth.

Antibiotic solutions were added aseptically to just-autoclaved media at approx. 40-50 °C.

Strain isolation and identification

Nine sourdough starters were donated to this project. Codes, suburbs and isolates from each bakery are given in **Table 1**.

Put table 1 here

Table 1 *Maudiozyma humilis* and *Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis* isolated from sourdough starters. Cells shaded grey indicate starters that contain both species.

Leaven	Origin	Code	Species	Top BLAST identity (%)
Os	Ovens St Bakery, Brunswick VIC	OsY1	*Maudiozyma humilis*	98.9
Osr	Ovens St Bakery, Brunswick VIC	OsrY6	*Maudiozyma humilis*	99.3
Os	Ovens St Bakery, Brunswick VIC	OsY5	*Maudiozyma humilis*	99.4
Osr	Ovens St Bakery, Brunswick VIC	OsrY1	*Maudiozyma humilis*	99.5
Nrk	Natimuk, VIC	NrkY1	*Maudiozyma humilis*	99.7
Nrk	Natimuk, VIC	NrkB1	*Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*	100.0
Os	Ovens St Bakery, Brunswick VIC	OsB1	*Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*	100.0
Os	Ovens St Bakery, Brunswick VIC	OsB2	*Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*	100.0
Osr	Ovens St Bakery, Brunswick VIC	OsrB1	*Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*	100.0
Lbr	Loafer Bread Bakery, Fitzroy North VIC	LbrY1	*Maudiozyma humilis*	98.0
Fb	Falco Bakery, Collingwood VIC	FbY1	*Maudiozyma humilis*	99.7
Lb	Loafer Bread Bakery, Fitzroy North VIC	LbY2	*Maudiozyma humilis*	99.8
Gw	Great Western Granary, Great Western VIC	GwB1	*Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*	100.0
Kb	Ket Baker, Wallington VIC	KbB1	*Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*	100.0
Zb	Zelda Bakery, Ripponlea VIC	ZbY4	*Maudiozyma humilis*	100.0

During sampling, care was taken to avoid contamination such that only microbes present in the sourdough starter itself or the 'house microbiota' (organisms associated with each isolate's respective bakers and bakery environment) of the bakery would be collected [25]. Bakers were asked to collect a portion of their sourdough starter(s) in sterile tubes, or to provide a sample in their own container. Samples were stored at room temperature prior to analysis and cultured 24-72 h after the last starter refreshment.

Sourdough starters were first serially diluted by adding approx. 1 g starter to 9 mL 0.1% w/v peptone water. Suspensions were vortexed thoroughly between each dilution step. Serial dilutions were carried out until a factor of 10^{-6} was reached. Aliquots of 100 μL of each 10^{-3}-10^{-6} suspension were spread-plated on antibiotic-supplemented WLN and YPD agar to isolate yeasts, and antibiotic-supplemented MRS agar to isolate LAB.

123   Plates were incubated in aerobic conditions at 28 °C for 2-3 days. Plates with 30-300 countable

124   colonies present were selected for sub-culturing. Well-isolated colonies were selected on the basis of

125   distinct morphological characteristics. Three iterations of streak plating were performed to isolate

126   pure colonies. After the third iteration, each isolate was given an identification code to reflect its

127   origin, and glycerol stocks were stored at -80 °C.

Yeast isolate identification

Genomic DNA was extracted from pure yeast colonies with the MasterPure™ Yeast DNA Purification

Kit (Epicentre®, Madison, WI) according to the manufacturer's instructions. PCR amplifications of

the extracted DNA were carried out using the KAPA HiFi HotStart PCR Kit (Kapa Biosystems,

Wilmington, MA). The reaction used the primers NL-1 and NL-4 to target the D1/D2 region of the

large subunit ribosomal DNA as described in Kurtzman & Robnett [26]. Amplicons were submitted to

the Australian Genome Research Facility (AGRF) for sequencing. Raw sequences were trimmed,

forward and reverse sequences aligned, and the alignments searched against the NCBI nucleotide

database in Geneious Prime 2024.0. In the event of an ambiguous or improbable top result, YeastIP

[27], a curated sequence database, was used to identify isolates.

Bacterial isolate identification

139   Pure bacterial colonies were prepared for identification in Applied Biosystems™ PrepMan® Ultra

140   Sample Preparation Reagent (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Attenuated samples were submitted to the

141   AGRF for taxonomic assignations using the 16S rRNA gene.

Strain selection for dough and bread analyses

One sourdough-derived *Maudiozyma humilis* strain was selected for small-scale breadmaking trials

based on the following criteria: a) originated from a sourdough starter in which a *Fructilactobacillus*

sanfranciscensis isolate was also present and b) demonstrated acceptable levels of growth on standard

growth carbohydrates and fructan-like carbohydrates.

A defined medium (Yeast Nitrogen Base with amino acids (YNB) Sigma) supplemented individually

with 0.5% w/v glucose, fructose, small FOS (DP 2-8), or large FOS (DP > 60) was prepared to test

yeast isolate growth on different carbon sources. Small FOS and large FOS (inulin) were purchased

from Megazyme (Bray, Ireland)

Yeasts were precultured twice in aliquots of 5 mL of a starvation medium based on the composition of

YPD that contained 5% of the standard concentration of glucose (1% w/v yeast extract, 2% w/v

peptone, 0.1% w/v glucose). Cell suspension turbidity was standardised to an optical density

measurement at 600nm (OD_{600}) of 0.1 in 0.1% peptone. To each well of a U-bottomed 96-well

microtitre plate, 198 μL supplemented YNB broth was added. Aliquots of 2 μL of the yeast cell

suspensions were added, and 2 μL 0.1% peptone was used for the blanks. Plates were incubated for 24

h at 28 °C, and cell density was measured with a plate reader (Multiskan Go®, ThermoFisher) every

hour at 600 nm. Kinetic parameters used to assess yeast growth performance were obtained with the

growthcurver package [28].

Dough and bread analyses

Inoculum preparation

Yeasts and bacteria were maintained on YPD and MRS agar, respectively. A fresh plate was prepared

2-5 days prior to breadmaking to ensure maximum live cells. *M. humilis* OsrY1 and the baker's yeast

were precultured in 30mL YPD broth at 28 °C at 220 rpm for 18 h. *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1 was

precultured in 30mL MRS broth at 29 °C at 18% CO_2 for 72 h. Prior to baking, precultures were

centrifuged at 4000 rpm/1789 rcf for 5 min and the growth medium was removed.

To inoculate dough with baker's yeast in the same manner as the sourdough-derived microbes, a

commercially available baker's yeast was purchased and cultured in YPD broth. The baker's yeast was

maintained on YPD and stored in 80% v/v glycerol.

Dough preparation

Bread dough was prepared in small domestic breadmaking machines (BM2500 Compact Bakehouse, Sunbeam, NSW, Australia). Each batch of dough was composed of 500 g flour, 7.5 g table salt, 5 g canola oil, and 315 g water. Pre-cultured cells were added as shown in **Table 2** with a sterile transfer pipette. White wheat all-purpose baker's flour containing 11.5% protein and 3.0% dietary fibre was used (Wallaby T55 variety, Laucke, South Australia). Doughs were mixed for 5 min on setting 9, then the machines were switched off.

Put table 2 here

Table 2 Dough fermentation microbe treatments applied to samples.

Treatment, code	Microbe(s)	Inoculum mass (g)	CFU/g dough
Unstarted dough, None	None	0	0
Baker's yeast, BY	*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* BY	0.6 ± 0.05	2.4×10^5
Sourdough yeast, OsrY1	*Maudiozyma humilis* OsrY1	0.6 ± 0.05	2.4×10^5
Sourdough bacterium, OsrB1	*Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis* OsrB1	0.6 ± 0.05	8.6×10^6
Sourdough co-culture, OsrY1 + OsrB1	*M. humilis* OsrY1 + *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1	1.2 ± 0.1	2.4×10^5 yeast + 8.6×10^6 bacteria

Dough characterisation

Enumeration of yeast and LAB

Quantities of 0.5 ± 0.05 g bread dough were added incubated at 25 or 32°C. At 0, 2, 6, and 24 h proofing, aliquots of 4.5 mL 0.1% w/v peptone water were added. Tubes were vigorously shaken and vortexed to create a 10^{-1} dilution, then the dough slurry was serially diluted to 10^{-5}. Aliquots of 75 μL of the 10^{-3}-10^{-5} dilutions were spread plated on antibiotic-supplemented MRS and YPD agar. The MRS plates were incubated at 27°C under 18% CO_2 and the YPD plates were incubated under aerobic conditions at 28°C for 4 days. Plates containing colonies within the countable range (30-300) were selected for enumeration.

Dough pH and temperature

A solid-state food and dairy pH meter HI199161 (Hanna Instruments) was used to measure dough pH

and temperature at each proofing time point. Three separate measures were obtained at each time

point by placing the pH probe in three different locations within the dough sample.

Dough gassing capacity

Immediately after mixing, portions of 100 g dough were added to 500 mL Schott bottles and sealed

with gas pressure modules (ANKOM Technology, Macedon, NY). Bottles were kept in incubators set

to 25 or 32°C, and pressure measurements were taken every 15 s over 24 h.

Dough FODMAP quantification

Quantities of approx. 5 g dough were sampled at 0, 6, and 24 h of fermentation. The 2 h timepoint

was omitted from analysis due to unacceptable bread technical qualities (i.e. insufficient gas

production for leavening), but the 0 h was analysed as a baseline. Dough samples were freeze-dried

for 72 h (Biobase freeze dryer BK-FD10P). Dough was then crushed to a powder with a metal spatula,

and FODMAPs were extracted using a hot water method. For fructan analyses, 0.1 g freeze-dried,

powdered dough was added to 5 mL deionised water and incubated in boiling water for 15 min. For

the other FODMAP and dough enzyme analyses, 0.1 g lyophilised dough was added to 1 mL

deionised water and incubated for 10 minutes at 80°C in a heating block. Fructan, mannitol, and

excess fructose were quantified with UV-based methods using kits from K-FRUC, K-MANOL, and

K-FRUGL kits respectively (Megazyme).

Bread preparation and characterisation

Quantities of 325 g dough were portioned into lightly oiled containers, covered with cling film and

left to prove for 2, 6, or 24 hours in incubators set to 25 or 32°C. One hour before the end of the set

proofing time, doughs were knocked back and shaped into small loaf tins (14.6 x 7.62 cm, Wilton).

For all doughs, the final hour of proving was carried out at 25°C to ensure consistent dough

temperature prior to baking. Loaves were baked in a Convotherm 4 easyDial 6.10 ES oven (Elfging,

Germany) for 30 min at 180°C (fan 4, Crisp & tasty 3, Bake pro 3). After baking, they were cooled,

and a serrated knife was used to make slices of approx. 2 cm thick. The maximum height of the

middle three slices from each loaf was measured.

Two slices from each loaf were photographed with an iPhone 13 using default camera settings in a

light box (Photosimile 50; Ortery, Irvine, CA) for digital image analysis. Photographs were cropped to

show only the largest area of regular crumb patterns. They were then analysed with MATLAB® ver.

R2023b (Mathworks Inc., Matick, MA) to output various parameters, including void fraction, mean

cell area (mm^2), small cell density (per cm^2), and large cell density (per cm^2).

Bread sensory analysis

An untrained sensory consumer panel was used to test palatability and acceptability of low-FODMAP

wheat breads. Four samples were selected based on a) low-FODMAP status and b) acceptable bread

technical quality (Table 3).

Put table 3 here

Table 3 Low-FODMAP bread samples chosen for sensory analysis.

Fermentation microbe(s)	Fermentation time (h)	Fermentation temp. (°C)
Baker's yeast (*S. cerevisiae*)	24	25
M. humilis OsrY1	24	25
M. humilis OsrY1 + *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1	24	25
M. humilis OsrY1 + *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1	6	25

Participants (*n* = 56) aged 18-50 attended four sensory panel sessions held over a 5-day period. One

week prior to testing, bread loaves were baked, cut into 1-cm-thick slices, and frozen. Samples were

defrosted the night before each session. Participants were asked to examine and taste each bread

sample one at a time, labelled with a random 3-digit code. The order in which the four samples were

given was randomised for each participant. They were asked to score each sample based on how it

looked, smelled, and tasted using a 7-point semi-structured scale with described extremes. Approval

for this experiment was given by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee

(HREC 2024-30068-56367-3).

Statistical analyses

All experiments were carried out in triplicate, and statistical analyses and data visualisations were completed in R [29]. Group means for all data except the bread sensory data were compared with the Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric test, and *post-hoc* pairwise comparisons were made with the Dunn's test with Bonferroni's correction applied. Sensory data scores were compared with one-way ANOVA, and pairwise comparisons conducted with Tukey's HSD test. Statistical significance was considered at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Yeasts and bacteria from sourdough starters

Based on LSU rDNA gene sequencing results, nine *Maudiozyma humilis* strains were isolated from the sourdough starters studied (**Table 1**). Pairwise identity for yeasts ranged from 98 to 99.8% and for bacteria was 100%. Bacteria were identified using the 16S rRNA gene, and the main species identified was *Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*.

Since *M. humilis* and *F. sanfranciscensis* are a frequently co-occurring pair in sourdough starters [15], these species were selected for low-FODMAP bread-making trials. In order to maximise potential FODMAP degradation, we focused on assessing the functional properties of the *M. humilis* strains, as *F. sanfranciscensis* is not among the group of LAB that produce FODMAP-degrading enzymes such as fructanase [30]. To select the *M. humilis* strain most capable of bread FODMAP reduction and best suited to bread-making, growth was measured in defined media individually supplemented with carbohydrates. Strains with growth kinetic parameters are listed in **Table 4**.

Put table 4 here

257 **Table 4** Growth kinetic parameters of *Maudiozyma humilis* strains. Growth performance of strains
258 was assessed in yeast nitrogen base (YNB), a defined medium individually supplemented with fructo-
259 oligosaccharides (FOS) with a degree of polymerisation (DP) of 2-8, FOS DP > 60, or glucose. Values
260 shown are mean ± SD.

Strain	Area under the curve (AUC)			Time to mid-exponential phase (h)		
	YNB + FOS DP < 8	YNB + FOS DP > 60	YNB + glucose	YNB + FOS DP < 8	YNB + FOS DP > 60	YNB + glucose
M. humilis NrkY1	11.44 ± 0.69	9.18 ± 0.86	13.98 ± 0.42	11.56 ± 0.52	10.38 ± 0.75	7.48 ± 0.35
M. humilis OsY1	8.65 ± 2.92	6.64 ± 2.59	18.43 ± 0.68	11.05 ± 0.76	10.92 ± 1.17	7.89 ± 0.08
M. humilis OsY5	9.25 ± 4.82	6.35 ± 2.54	15.9 ± 1.51	10.72 ± 0.73	9.32 ± 1.54	8.11 ± 0.32
M. humilis OsrY1	10.77 ± 5.01	9.02 ± 0.32	18.44 ± 0.58	10.67 ± 1.16	8.93 ± 0.37	8.26 ± 0.16
M. humilis OsrY6	13.49 ± 1.16	6.43 ± 2.6	16.46 ± 1.56	11.18 ± 0.3	11.37 ± 0.66	8.13 ± 0.55
S. cerevisiae BY	9.38 ± 3.14	6.12 ± 3.06	17.72 ± 0.9	9.64 ± 2	12.18 ± 1.53	7.91 ± 0.08

261 *M. humilis* OsrY1 was selected for small-scale breadmaking trials because its growth intensity and

262 speed in defined media were either equivalent or superior to those of the other strains, particularly on

263 media supplemented with large FOS (DP > 60, **Table 4**). *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1 isolated from the

264 same starter (**Table 1**) was selected for co-culture and bacterial mono-culture tests.

Microbial growth kinetics

Bread dough was prepared with the following five microbe conditions: baker's yeast, *M. humilis*

OsrY1, *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1, *M. humilis* OsrY1 + *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1, and no inoculum

(unstarted dough). Doughs were fermented in proofing ovens set to either 25 or 32°C.

Internal dough temperature stabilised by 2 h fermentation and did not change thereafter. The mean

internal temperature of doughs fermented at 32°C and 25°C, regardless of microbial treatment, was

29°C and 24°C, respectively (**Table S2**).

Growth and persistence of yeasts and LAB in the dough substrate was investigated through plate

count-based enumeration (**Figure 2**). For all four inoculated treatments, colony-forming unit (CFU)

counts increased significantly over the course of the total 24 h fermentation time. This increase was

only statistically significant for the co-culture dough when fermented at 32°C, however. In the three

mono-culture doughs inoculated with only one strain, no contaminating yeast or bacteria were

detected. By 24 h, the baker's yeast reference dough did not have significantly higher yeast counts

than the *M. humilis* OsrY1 mono- and co-culture doughs.

Put figure 2 here

Figure 2 Changes in viable yeast and LAB counts in dough fermented at 25 and 32°C over time.
Dough samples were serially diluted in 0.1% w/v peptone, and yeast and LAB were enumerated on
antibiotic-supplemented YPD and MRS agar plates respectively. Log_{10}-transformed data presented as
mean ($n = 3$) colony-forming units (CFU) $\pm$ SE, * represents $p < 0.05$.

The highest CFU/g dough values were found in the dough inoculated solely with *F. sanfranciscensis*

OsrB1. Proofing temperature was found to have a significant effect on growth. At 6 h, LAB counts

were significantly higher in the co-culture dough fermented at 32°C than those in the 25°C co-culture

dough. No significant differences between LAB counts in the *F. sanfranciscensis* mono-culture dough

proofed at 25 and 32°C were detected. Conversely, for both treatments containing *M. humilis* OsrY1,

yeast counts at 24 h of fermentation were higher at 25°C than at 32°C. In the unstarted dough

treatment, to which no microbes were added during the dough mixing stage, counts of LAB and yeast

increased markedly by 24 h, and this increase was more pronounced at 32°C than at 25°C.

Dough pH was measured with a solid-state meter throughout the fermentation process. Over the 24-

hour measurement period, the pH of all doughs, regardless of inoculum or proofing temperature,

decreased (**Table S1**). pH of the *M. humilis* mono- and co-culture doughs decreased significantly from

2 to 24 h at both temperatures. In all dough fermentation treatments, the 24-hour samples had lower

pH values when fermented at 32°C than when fermented at 25°C.

Fermentation dynamics

300   An ANKOM gas production system was used to measure each treatment's dough leavening capability

301   in small quantities over 24 h. Area under the curve (AUC) of each treatment-temperature combination

302   was calculated to quantify overall gas production.

303   **Put figure 3 here**

Figure 3 At 25 °C, the leavening ability of *M. humilis* OsrY1 in mono- and co-culture is comparable to that of baker's yeast. **A** Lines indicate cumulative dough pressure output. **B** Boxplots show each treatment-temperature group AUC value. Mean ($n = 3$) values shown, error bars indicate SE. $* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$.

Dough cumulative pressure output was affected by microbial treatment, proofing temperature, and

individual treatment-temperature combinations. The treatments can be grouped into high- and low-

gassing capacity status according to whether they contain a yeast or not; the latter group's mean AUC

is < 50 (**Figure 3B**). Among these groups, the treatments that demonstrated the highest and lowest

gassing capacity were baker's yeast fermented at 32°C and unstarted dough at 25°C. Overall gas

production at either fermentation temperature did not significantly differ between any of the yeasted

treatments. At 2, 6, and 24 h, dough leavening ability was significantly improved by increased

fermentation temperature (**Figure 3C**).

FODMAP content

Changes in concentrations of key dough FODMAPs (fructans, mannitol, excess fructose) over time

under different fermentation conditions were measured.

Put figure 4 here

Figure 4 Reduction of fructan levels to below the low-FODMAP threshold is achieved when a
fermenting yeast is present and the dough is fermented for 6 hours or longer. The dotted line indicates
low-FODMAP threshold for oligosaccharides in cereal products as described by Varney et al. [3].
Points indicate mean ($n = 3$) total FODMAP content per 50 g serving ± SD. * $p < 0.05$.

Fructan was the main FODMAP detected (89.6% of total measured FODMAP content), with mannitol

and excess fructose being found in minor proportions (5.3% and 5.1%, respectively). Over 24 h dough

fermentation, *M. humilis* OsrY1 was capable of fructan degradation (and lowering of total FODMAP

content) to the same extent as baker's yeast (**Figure 4**). By 24 h, all three yeasted treatments lowered

fructan levels to well below the 0.3 g per serve threshold required to classify a food as low in

oligosaccharides.

The increase in mannitol concentration in the dough over time was only significant for dough

fermented solely by *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1. By the 24 h timepoint, mannitol consisted of approx.

27% total FODMAP content in *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1 dough fermented at both 25 and 32°C.

Furthermore, mannitol levels were negligible in all other treatments, including the dough co-cultured

with *M. humilis* OsrY1.

In yeasted doughs fermented at 32°C, excess fructose tended to accumulate around the 6 h timepoint

and deplete as fermentation continued. For *M. humilis* OsrY1, this depletion was statistically

significant ($p = 0.04291$). In general, dough monosaccharides followed an 'accumulate-deplete'

pattern in yeasted doughs (**Figure S2**). Available fructose and glucose levels were not linked to dough

α-amylase content, which did not change in any inoculated doughs (**Figure S1**), so either microbial

enzymes or other forms of endogenous amylases were likely to have been responsible.

At each time point, fermentation temperature demonstrated no significant effect on total FODMAP

content. However, for specific treatment groups, effects related to individual FODMAPs were

observed. At both 6 and 24 h fermentation, total FODMAP levels in *M. humilis* OsrY1 mono-culture

doughs fermented at 32°C were lower than those at 25°C ($p = 0.04953$). *M. humilis* OsrY1 dough

proofed for 6 h at 32°C was the only treatment with fructan levels below the 0.3 g per serve threshold

at this time point. Fructan degradation by baker's yeast was slightly improved at 32°C compared to

25°C at the 24 h time point ($p = 0.04953$), and doughs containing *F. sanfranciscensis* OsrB1 showed

significantly higher mannitol levels at 6 h when fermented at 32°C. In general, temperature-based

comparisons were only marginally significant at the α = 0.05 threshold. There were also no significant

differences in excess fructose content according to proofing temperature.

Crumb structure quality parameters

To ensure that any low-FODMAP bread produced was sufficiently leavened and had an optimal

crumb structure, various loaf quality parameters were measured.

Put figure 5 here

Figure 5 During dough fermentation, higher temperatures are associated with faster leavening, but
cause more severe over-proofing. **A** Loaf height, **B** percentage of loaf cross section composed of
'void' or gas pockets (well-leavened bread exceeds 25% void fraction, indicated by the black dotted
line). Points and error bars indicate mean ($n = 3$) ± SE. * $p < 0.05$.

An interplay between fermentation microbe, temperature, and extent was observed in the degree of

leavening of the different breads. In the early stages of fermentation (2 h), only loaf heights of yeasted

treatments proofed at 32°C approached acceptable values. The baker's yeast loaves were significantly

taller at 2 and 6 h fermentation at 32 than at 25°C. For doughs baked at later fermentation stages, the

distinction between yeasted and non-yeasted doughs was more evident at 25 than 32°C (**Figure 5A**).

The yeasted doughs fermented at 32°C underwent over-proving (collapse of dough gluten structure

resulting in reduced loaf height). This effect was most pronounced for the baker's yeast bread, whose

height decreased by approx. 10 mm by 24 h compared to 6 h. Bread is considered appropriately

leavened when composed of approximately 25% 'void' or gas pockets (**Figure 5B**). The void fraction

of the *M. humilis* OsrY1 mono- and co-culture loaves was not significantly different from the baker's

yeast loaves under any conditions, nor did the mono- and co-culture loaf void fractions differ from

each other.

The size and variation in size of the gas pockets is also an important crumb structure parameter. The

average gas pocket size increases with fermentation duration (**Figure S4A**). A less uniform crumb

structure was more common in bread made from dough proofed at 25°C, and large gas pockets only

appeared in the 32°C breads once over-proved (**Figure S4B**).

Bread sensory analysis

382   Finally, to confirm that low-FODMAP bread produced with sourdough co-cultures would be

383   palatable, we conducted a sensory panel. Un-trained participants were asked to rate various visual,

384   taste, and aroma aspects of each of the four samples on 7-point scales with defined extremes. **Figure 6**

385   shows the distribution and mean scores given to each sample in response to the survey.

386   **Put figure 6 here**

Figure 6 While standard bread is generally preferred, fermenting sourdough co-culture bread for longer improves overall liking and distinctive sourdough flavours and aromas. Un-trained study participants ($n = 56$) scored samples on each attribute on a 7-point scale with defined extremes (1 = dislike, 7 = like). $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, **** $p < 0.0001$.

Sensory participants gave the highest overall liking scores to baker's yeast bread fermented for 24 h at 25°C, and this was also reflected in their scores for overall flavour, aroma, and texture (**Figure 6**). The baker's yeast sample only scored significantly higher for overall liking, flavour, and visual than the 6 h bread co-fermented with *M. humilis* and *F. sanfranciscensis*, not the two 24 h breads fermented with *M. humilis*.

Between the two breads fermented with sourdough co-culture, panellists tended to prefer the 24 h bread, which received higher scores for sour/vinegar and fruity aromas and flavours. The 24 h bread also had a lower total FODMAP content than the 6 h bread (**Figure 4**). The aroma complexity of the 24 h co-culture bread was also rated significantly higher than the 6 h bread. Both sour/vinegar attributes were scored higher for the 24 h co-culture bread than the *M. humilis* mono-culture bread although they did not differ in terms of dough pH (**Table S1**). Fruity aromas and flavours were also scored as significantly stronger in the co-culture 24 h bread than the 6 h bread.

Of the three 24 h breads, the two containing *M. humilis* were rated as being significantly darker in colour than the baker's yeast bread, and overall visual scores were lower for these two samples than

407   the baker's yeast and 6 h co-culture breads (**Figure S3**). Positive perceptions of bread texture may

408   have been inversely related to dough pH (**Table S1).**

Discussion

This study isolated and identified yeasts and bacteria in sourdough starters and optimised the use of a

selected sourdough-derived co-culture in the production of low-FODMAP white wheat bread.

Variation in bread dough fermentation process parameters facilitates leavening and FODMAP

degradation to differing extents depending on the fermentation microbe(s) used.

Globally, 80 species of yeast and 82 species of lactobacilli have been identified in multiple instances

in sourdough starters [17]. In accordance with the findings of our survey of sourdough starters, the

two most common yeast species found in sourdough starters are *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and

Maudiozyma humilis [31, 32]. *M. humilis* and *F. sanfranciscensis* have previously been found to

frequently co-occur in sourdough starters and contribute interdependently to the bread fermentation

process [33]. This pairing occurred in three of the nine sourdough starters sampled in the present

study.

Our quantification of fructans in white wheat dough aligns with previously published values, and

confirms that they are the principal FODMAP found in bread dough [7, 10].

The inulinase activity of *Kluyveromyces marxianus* CBS6014 allows this yeast to effect rapid and

near-complete degradation of fructans in whole wheat flour, whose fructan content is generally higher

than that in white wheat flour [10, 24]. *M. humilis*, which does not produce inulinase or any other

enzyme specific to dough oligosaccharides relies instead on invertase. Both our and other published

studies of changes in fructan levels in dough fermented by invertase-producing yeasts like *M. humilis*

and *S. cerevisiae* suggest that effectiveness of invertase-mediated fructan degradation is heavily

dependent on fermentation duration [6, 13, 23]. Mannitol accumulated in the dough inoculated solely

with *Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis*. This was expected, as this bacterium is known to use

fructose in bread dough as an external electron acceptor to regenerate NADP, thereby producing

mannitol [34]. However, it did not accumulate in the co-culture dough treatment. It is unlikely that *M.*

humilis consumed the mannitol produced, as it is described as negative for growth or assimilation on

mannitol [35]. The more likely explanation is that *M. humilis* consumed the available fructose before

F. sanfranciscensis could convert it to mannitol, as in standard bread containing only baker's yeast,

fructose concentration decreases with extended fermentation duration [6]. This is further supported by

depletion of fructose in yeasted doughs compared to the bacteria-only treatments (Figure S2).

Dough fermentation co-cultures must perform well from a technical standpoint as well as beneficially

modulating bread FODMAP composition. Differences in fermentative performance according to

dough fermentation temperature suggested that baker's yeast is reliant on higher temperatures for

optimal leavening and FODMAP reduction. This is likely to be a property of *S. cerevisiae* having a

larger growth temperature range [36]. This difference was less pronounced for *M. humilis*, whose type

strain does not grow at temperatures over 30°C [35]. Furthermore, we found that decreases in loaf

height were worse at the higher dough fermentation temperature tested, although more specific dough

gas retention capacity and porosity data were not able to be captured by the ANKOM gas pressure

monitors used. Together, these results suggest that *M. humilis* is better suited to an extended, cooler

dough fermentation regime targeted towards reducing FODMAP levels while maintaining bread

quality. Only one pairing was tested in the present study, but Carbonetto et al. [37] found that co-

culturing *M. humilis* with LAB strains affected loaf height in a strain combination-dependent manner.

However, as an obligately heterofermentative bacterium, *Fructilactobacillus sanfranciscensis* is

expected to affect loaf height in either a positive or neutral way [37], so it is possible that other

sourdough-derived *F. sanfranciscensis* strains would interact with *M. humilis* in a similar way due to

their physiology. Lactic acid produced by *F. sanfranciscensis* slightly weakens the dough gluten

matrix by increasing its elasticity, necessitating dough manipulation technique adjustments to account

for this [38]. Decreases in dough pH were also observed in yeast-only doughs (Table S1), although

variability of these measures may have been affected by variables such as ambient humidity.

In addition to their loaf technical properties (i.e., leavening), fermentation microbes from sourdough

contribute desirable aroma and flavour attributes to bread that consumers find appealing. Non-

conventional yeast species are known to generate particular aromas in bread, especially fruity ones

[39]. Our panellists only detected these in breads co-fermented with *F. sanfranciscensis*, suggesting

that organic acids were the main volatile metabolites being detected. More generally, our study found

that consumers preferred baker's yeast bread, which echoes previous findings from similar trials [40].

However, while panellists' preferences for the baker's yeast and co-culture breads fermented for 24 h

at 25°C were similar, significant differences between 6 and 24 h sourdough co-culture breads were

detected. In terms of overall liking, colour, sour/vinegar aromas and flavours, fruity aromas and

flavours, and aroma complexity, the 24 h sourdough co-culture breads scored higher. This

demonstrates the potential sensory value in extending dough fermentations. Many sourdough-

associated volatile aroma compounds evaporate before or during the baking process, however [41],

which may explain why the sourdough microbe breads did not receive the highest scores for aroma

complexity.

The research presented here builds on the small but growing body of literature focusing on Australian

sourdough starters. Our results show that increasing fermentation temperature slightly improves the

extent of fructan degradation by invertase-producing yeasts. However, this effect is only relevant to

the early stages of dough fermentation (< 6 h). Likewise, higher fermentation temperatures lead to

slightly improved leavening in yeasted doughs, but this leads to over-proving in extended dough

fermentations. This effect was less pronounced for *M. humilis*, whose gas production pattern was

slower, steadier, and less affected by proofing temperature increases. Therefore, we recommend that a

dough fermentation aimed at FODMAP reduction should feature an extended dough fermentation (> 6

h), ambient proofing temperature, and fermenting microbes which do not over-leaven bread in these

conditions.

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Human ethics and consent to participate

Every participant gave free and informed consent.

Ethical approval

The sensory assessment performed in this study was approved by The University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 2024-30068-56367-3), in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Author contribution declarations

Anna Elizabeth Wittwer and Jiaying Amanda Li conducted the experiments, analysed data and curated resources. Anna Elizabeth Wittwer wrote the first draft of the paper. Kate Howell provided oversight and supervision of the project. All authors reviewed and approved the manuscript.

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