

Yield stress of jam, chocolate spread and peanut butter measured with Thermo Scientific HAAKE Viscotester iQ and vane rotors

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Key words

Jam, Chocolate Spread, Peanut Butter, Yield Stress, Vane Rotor, Automated QC Evaluation and Documentation

Abstract

A standard task in the Quality Control (QC) of typical food spreads – like jam, chocolate spread or peanut butter – is the determination of the yield stress in a container. For this purpose a vane rotor needs to be moved into the intact product structure in a perfectly vertical movement. Efficient and high-throughput QC measurements require a rheometer with an easy-to-operate lift function and a quickly adaptable universal container holder for different container designs as well as software routines for automated measurement, evaluation and QC documentation. An optionally available temperature sensor mounted parallel to the rotor allows to record the sample temperature.

The yield stress of a food product is a measure of important material characteristics such as stability, mouth feeling, pourability, spreadability and processability and is affected by the food ingredients and their formulation [1 - 3].

Introduction

In order to investigate the effect of particles and different formulations on the yield stress as well as to study the reproducibility of the method, three typical food spreads were tested.

An advantage of vane rotors is that they can be used for testing materials with larger particles. The size of the vane blades needs to be several times bigger than the maximum particle size (e.g. the seeds in a raspberry jam). From a rheological point of view, the solid particles act as passive filler (like glass beads) and therefore do not contribute to the elastic network caused by weak interaction of molecules or larger aggregates. Below the yield point, a sample is showing a linear response to an applied shear stress or deformation. Around the yield point, the applied stresses become large enough to alter the microstructure of the material and cause a non-linear viscoelastic response. Above its yield point, a material behaves like a liquid. The results obtained from yield stress determination strongly depend on the rheological method and experimental settings used [1 - 3].

Chocolate spreads show differences in sugar, fat, cacao and protein content as well as the type of emulsifier. This



Fig. 1: Thermo Scientific HAAKE Viscotester iQ with mounted universal container holder and vane rotor FL26-2 blades (left); universal container holder with three vane rotors: 4-blade rotors FL16 and FL22 as well as FL26-2 blades (right)

may have a considerable effect on the yield stress. Two different commercially available chocolate spreads were selected for this investigation.

The yield stress of peanut butter is even higher than that of chocolate spread [4]. Therefore, creamy peanut butter was selected to check the reproducibility of the vane rotor measuring curves and yield stress evaluation.

Yield stress is by definition the minimum shear stress required to make a material flow. The yield stress is a measure for pourability, spreadability and spoonability and is also used to predict product stability [2 - 5]. The calculated yield stress values τ_0 depend on the one hand on the spread's ingredients and on the other hand on the rheological method and experimental parameters used for yield stress determination. Moreover, the pre-experimental sample handling plays an essential role and determines whether an intact or a disturbed structure is measured [2, 3, 5].

Regarding rheological measuring methods, the most accurate and recommended method to determine absolute yield stress values is the Controlled Stress (CS) ramp with plate/plate measuring geometry. This requires careful sample preparation, handling and loading in order to maintain the intact structure of the material [6]. Stirring or squeezing would lead from the static yield stress of the intact structure to the (lower) dynamic yield stress of a disturbed structure [1 - 3]. Loading a sample properly into a plate/plate, plate/cone (or concentric cylinder) measuring geometry with subsequent equilibration and CS ramp yield stress measurement takes about 10 (or 20) minutes.

For QC, this may be too time-consuming – therefore, relative vane rotor measurements with an intact sample structure in the original container are often preferred, since they can be conducted much faster and are related to the static yield stress [2, 3, 5]. The correct selection of the experimental parameters for vane rotor measurements is fundamental – this is discussed in more detail below and in [7]. In general, Controlled Rate (CR) mode with rotational speeds lower than 1 rpm is recommended [2].

Materials and methods

A Thermo Scientific™ HAAKE™ Viscotester™ iQ equipped with a 4-blade vane rotor FL16 (vane diameter 16 mm, height 8.8 mm) or FL22 (vane diameter 22 mm, height 16 mm) and an universal container holder (Fig. 1) was used for the yield stress determination in CR mode. In this investigation, the rotational speed was set to 0.05 rpm for all measurements.

Five commercially available food spreads were investigated with the same method using different vane sizes (see below). The sealed jar was opened and fixed in the universal container holder. Using the manual lift function of the HAAKE Viscotester iQ and the features of the Thermo Scientific™ HAAKE™ RheoWin™ software (Fig. 2), the vane rotor was prevented from rotating (element 1: CR mode $\dot{\gamma} = 0 \text{ s}^{-1}$) and lowered vertically into a well-reproducible position as well as penetration depth (according to the dimensions and shape of the container type; element 2).

Practical experience shows that stiffer products, which are filled into a container in a process line at higher speed, can show different material properties at different regions within the container. In such a case it is mandatory to make the vane measurement always in the same position in each particular container design in order to obtain comparable and reproducible results.

After a short equilibration and recovery time (element 3), the total time t was set to zero (element 4) right before the measurement was started. A low rotational speed (here: 0.05 rpm) was applied and a set number of data points was recorded within the set time (element 5). With an automated evaluation and QC element (element 6: curve discussion), the maximum in the shear stress τ vs. time t plot was automatically determined. The HAAKE RheoWin software provides the option to check, whether τ_0 is within (pass) or outside (fail) the given range [9]. Finally, a report was generated (element 7). It can either be saved in different file formats (e.g. in pdf, jpeg, tiff or emf format) or directly be sent to a printer.

For each sample class, the most suitable rotor type and rotational speed need to be determined in a preliminary test. Smaller vane rotors are used for samples with stronger texture and higher yield stress, like peanut butter, while

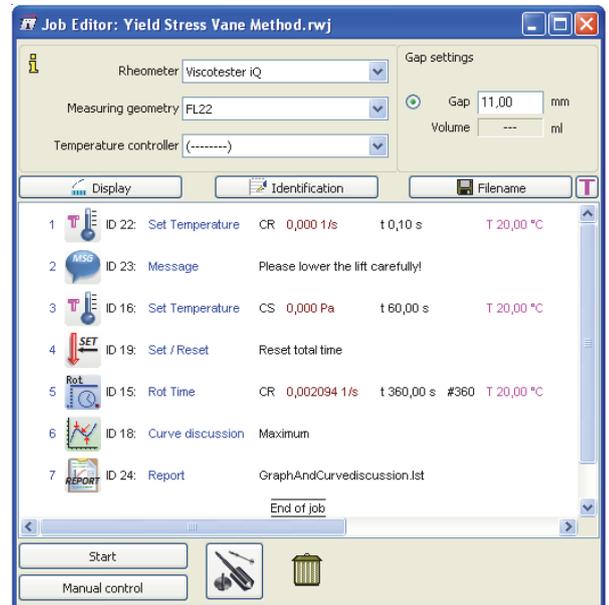


Fig. 2: HAAKE RheoWin measuring job for measurement and automated evaluation and documentation

larger vane rotors are more suitable for samples with lower viscosity and lower yield stress, like chocolate spread, jam or mayonnaise [7].

In order to determine one rotational speed, which fits all samples of a class, different rotational speeds need to be tested. A too high rotational speed leads to a sharp peak which cannot be evaluated (red triangles in Fig. 3). A too low rotational speed delivers an asymptotic curve with no maximum (green circles). The goal is to select a rotational speed, which generates a curve with evaluable maximum (blue rectangles). The speed corresponding to the highest evaluable maximum is the best choice for this particular sample [7]. For this investigation, a rotational speed of 0.05 rpm turned out to be a suitable set value.

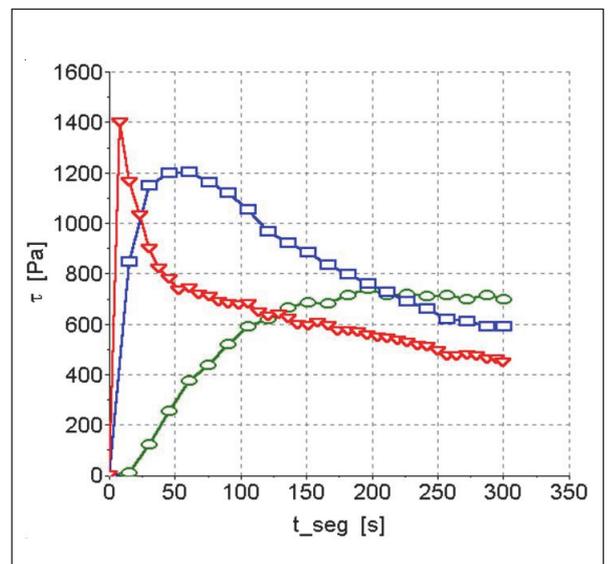


Fig. 3: Schematic comparison of vane rotor yield stress measurements with higher (red triangles), medium (blue rectangles) and lower rotational speed (green circles)

Results and discussion

The effect of the composition on the yield stress was subject of several investigations in the past. Different behaviors were observed according to the nature and number of ingredients of the formulation used for the studies [1 - 3].

The rheological characteristics of jams depend strongly on fruit type and jam formulation [8]. Fig. 4 shows the vane rotor yield stress measuring curves for two raspberry jams – one with seeds, the other sieved. As expected, the yield stress of the sieved jam is much higher than the yield stress of the jam with seeds, because the seeds behave like hard spheres and do not contribute to the stress bearing elastic structure. On the other hand, the time values for both jams are similar (Tab. 1).

As an example, the reproducibility of the measuring results was checked with the sieved jam – see last line in Tab. 1. Compared to the average value, the yield stress values differ only by $\pm 0.5\%$ and the time value is identical. After a 4-blade rotor has turned by 85° to 90° , no more intact sample can be sensed by the vane rotor. Therefore, the measuring curves exhibited a little decrease at around 300 s.

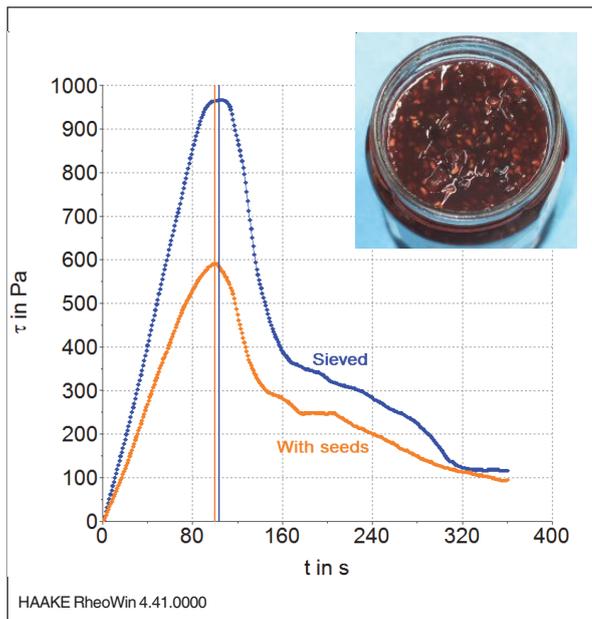


Fig. 4: Comparison of FL 22 vane rotor yield stress measurements with 0.05 rpm for a sieved raspberry jam (blue curve) and raspberry jam with seeds (orange curve, inserted image)

Raspberry jam	τ_0 in Pa	t in s
With seeds	590	100
Sieved	967	104
Sieved (measurement 2)	977	104

Tab. 1: Comparison of FL 22 vane rotor yield stress measurements with 0.05 rpm for a sieved raspberry jam and one with seeds

Fig. 5 and Tab. 2 show the results of the yield stress measurements for the tested chocolate spread products A and B. Product A contains more cacao, more protein (7 %) and more sugar (56 %) than product B (6 % protein; 50 % sugar). On the other hand, the fat content of product A (32 %) is lower than in product B (35 %). Furthermore, different emulsifiers were used – from soya (A) or sunflower (B). The yield stress value of product B is more than twice as high as of product A.

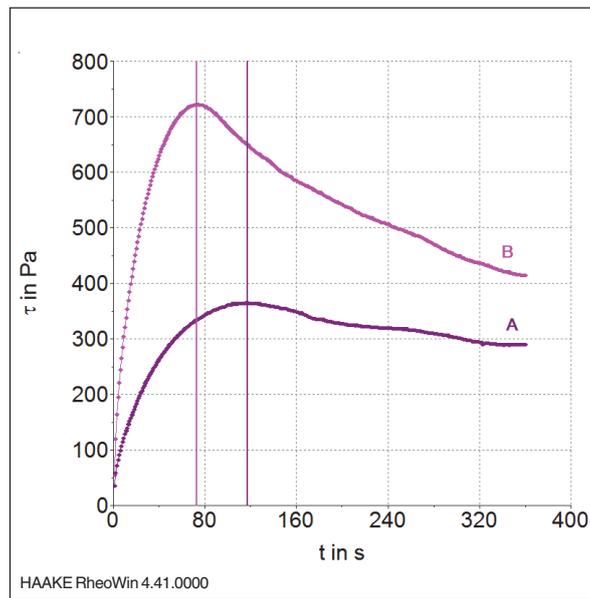


Fig. 5: FL 22 vane rotor yield stress measurements with 0.05 rpm for chocolate hazelnut spread products A and B

Chocolate spread	τ_0 in Pa	t in s
A	364	117
B	722	73

Tab. 2: Comparison of FL 22 vane rotor yield stress measurements with 0.05 rpm for chocolate hazelnut spread products

The reproducibility of CR vane rotor yield stress determination was tested with creamy peanut butter. Three independently conducted measurements with a FL16 rotor in CR mode with 0.05 rpm show excellent correlation – see Fig. 6 and Tab. 3. Compared to the average value, the yield stress values differ by less than $\pm 1.5\%$ and the time values are nearly identical.

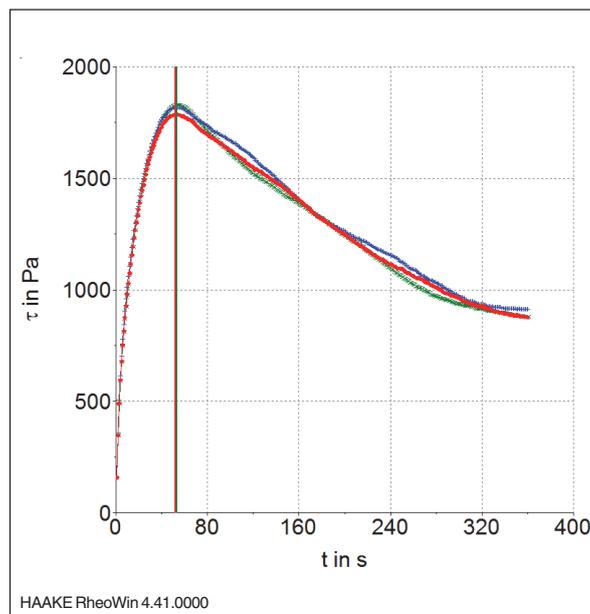


Fig. 6: Three independently conducted vane rotor (FL16) yield stress measurements in CR mode with 0.05 rpm for creamy peanut butter

Peanut butter	τ_0 in Pa	t in s
Measurement 1 (blue)	1818	52.1
Measurement 2 (red)	1785	52.1
Measurement 3 (green)	1829	53.2

Tab. 3: Three independently conducted vane rotor (FL16) yield stress measurements in CR mode with 0.05 rpm for creamy peanut butter

Conclusion

The HAAKE Viscotester iQ equipped with the universal container holder and a vane rotor allows efficient, high-throughput measuring routines for spread QC testing, using samples in their original containers with intact sample structure.

The instrument's smart lift function ensures convenient and fast handling. In combination with the easy-to-adjust universal container holder, it allows for a very well-controlled and perfectly vertical placement of the vane rotor in a reproducible position in the particular container type – a key to reproducible results.

The HAAKE Viscotester iQ can be operated either as a standalone unit with pre-defined or customized measurement and evaluation routines or, even more powerful, with the HAAKE RheoWin measurement and evaluation software. Its evaluation elements offer (as a standard feature) fully automated QC routines including pass/fail evaluation and documentation [9]. With all three types of spread, the maximum in the shear stress vs. time curve could be evaluated automatically.

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