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Edible coatings incorporating pomegranate peel extract and biocontrol yeast to reduce *Penicillium digitatum* postharvest decay of oranges / Kharchoufi, S.; Parafati, L.; Licciardello, F.; Muratore, G.; Hamdi, M.; Cirvilleri, G.; Restuccia, C.. - In: FOOD MICROBIOLOGY. - ISSN 0740-0020. - 74:(2018), pp. 107-112. [10.1016/j.fm.2018.03.011]

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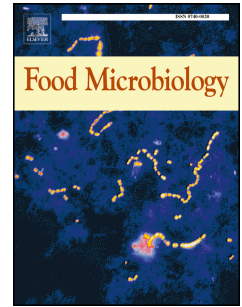
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27/04/2026 00:19

# Accepted Manuscript

Edible coatings incorporating pomegranate peel extract and biocontrol yeast to reduce *Penicillium digitatum* postharvest decay of oranges

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PII: S0740-0020(17)31064-X

DOI: [10.1016/j.fm.2018.03.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fm.2018.03.011)

Reference: YFMIC 2982

To appear in: *Food Microbiology*

Please cite this article as: Samira Kharchoufi, Lucia Parafati, Fabio Licciardello, Giuseppe Muratore, Mokthar Hamdi, Gabriella Cirvilleri, Edible coatings incorporating pomegranate peel extract and biocontrol yeast to reduce *Penicillium digitatum* postharvest decay of oranges, *Food Microbiology* (2018), doi: 10.1016/j.fm.2018.03.011

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1 **Edible coatings incorporating pomegranate peel extract and biocontrol yeast to reduce**  
2 ***Penicillium digitatum* postharvest decay of oranges**

3

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## 30 ABSTRACT

31 This study investigated the potential use of two edible coatings, chitosan (CH) and locust  
32 bean gum (LBG), which incorporated chemically characterized water pomegranate peel  
33 extract (WPPE) or methanol pomegranate peel extract (MPPE) and the biocontrol agent  
34 (BCA) *Wickerhamomyces anomalus*, to control the growth of *Penicillium digitatum* and to  
35 reduce the postharvest decay of oranges.

36 CH and LBG including pomegranate peel extracts (PPEs) at different concentrations were  
37 tested *in vitro* against *P. digitatum* to determine their antifungal efficacy; at the same time, the  
38 tolerance of viable cells of *W. anomalus* to increasing concentrations of WPPE and MPPE  
39 extracts was assessed. The potential application of selected bioactive coatings was evaluated  
40 *in vivo* on oranges, which had been artificially inoculated with *P. digitatum*, causal agent of  
41 green mold decay. CH incorporating MPPE or WPPE at all concentrations was able to inhibit  
42 *in vitro P. digitatum*, while LBG was active only at the highest MPPE or WPPE  
43 concentrations. *W. anomalus* BS91 was slightly inhibited only by MPPE-modified coatings,  
44 while no inhibition was observed by WPPE, which was therefore selected for the *in vivo* trials  
45 on oranges artificially inoculated with *P. digitatum*. The experimental results proved that the  
46 addition of 0.361 g dry WPPE/mL, both to CH and LBG coatings, significantly reduced  
47 disease incidence (DI) by 49 and 28% respectively, with respect to the relative controls.  
48 Besides the combination CH or LBG + WPPE, the addition of *W. anomalus* cells to coatings  
49 strengthened the antifungal effect with respect to the relative controls, as demonstrated by the  
50 significant reduction of DI (up to 95 and 75% respectively). The findings of the study  
51 contribute to the valorization of a value-added industrial byproduct and provide a significant

52 advancement in the development of new food protectant formulations, which benefit from the  
53 synergistic effect between biocontrol agents and natural bioactive compounds.

54

55 *Keywords:* Locust bean gum; Chitosan; *Wickerhamomyces anomalus*; Disease parameters

56

## 57 **1. Introduction**

58

59 Fruit and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet, due to their high content of  
60 vitamins, minerals and antioxidant compounds. Unfortunately, they are highly perishable and,  
61 during the postharvest stages, up to 25 and 50% of the total production in, respectively,  
62 industrialized and developing countries can be lost due to fungal pathogens (Li Destri Nicosia  
63 et al., 2016). Furthermore, fungal proliferation may lead to the contamination of products with  
64 mycotoxins as secondary metabolites (Wu et al., 2014).

65 The investigation of new eco-friendly approaches, such as the application of antagonistic  
66 microorganisms (Liu et al., 2013; Panebianco et al., 2015; Restuccia et al., 2006; Ruiz-  
67 Moyano et al., 2016; Scuderi et al., 2009) and/or of natural antimicrobial substances (Aloui et  
68 al., 2014; Palou et al., 2016) to control the postharvest mold decay, is preferred to synthetic  
69 fungicides to prevent negative or adverse effects on human health and nature balance. Such  
70 alternative solutions are considered relatively safe due to their natural origin, biodegradability  
71 and low toxicity to the environment (da Cruz Cabral et al., 2013). In particular, a biological  
72 control which relies on antagonistic yeasts has been reported to be effective at managing  
73 postharvest decay of a variety of fruit (Liu et al., 2013). Many yeasts belonging the genera  
74 *Candida*, *Metschnikowia*, *Wickerhamomyces* and *Aureobasidium* have been reported as  
75 effective biocontrol agents (BCAs) on postharvest diseases of citrus, apple, pear, grapefruit,  
76 table grape and sweet cherry (Aloui et al., 2015; Lutz et al., 2013; Oro et al., 2014; Parafati et

77 al., 2015; Platania et al., 2012). In the domain of plant-derived compounds with antimicrobial  
78 potential, PPE has been extensively investigated for its free radical scavenging effect and  
79 strong antioxidant capacity caused by the high concentration of biologically active  
80 components, such as punicalagin, ellagic, gallic and chlorogenic acids (Elsherbiny et al.,  
81 2016; Kazemi et al., 2016; Kharchoufi et al., 2018). Few researches investigated extracts from  
82 pomegranate peel as natural inhibitors for plant pathogenic bacteria and fungi (Elsherbiny et  
83 al., 2016; Endo et al., 2010; Romeo et al., 2015), including *Penicillium digitatum* (Kharchoufi  
84 et al., 2018; Li Destri Nicosia et al., 2016). However, there are still major obstacles to the  
85 large-scale use of plant extracts to control postharvest pathogens. Although plant extracts  
86 have proved to be good antimicrobial agents, their use for maintaining fruit quality and  
87 reducing fungal decay is often limited by application costs, reduced and inconsistent efficacy  
88 as a result of fruit physiology and environment, low residual activity, lack of curative effect  
89 and limited range of activity against different fungal pathogens (Bautista-Banos, 2014).

90 The incorporation of these natural compounds into edible coating formulations can be an  
91 effective approach to solve some of these problems while, at the same time, controlling fruit  
92 postharvest decay by lowering the diffusion processes and maintaining high concentrations of  
93 active molecules at the fruit surface. Edible coatings could be considered a safer alternative  
94 solution for citrus fruit than wax coatings (Parafati et al., 2016), which usually are composed  
95 of oxidized polyethylene, organic solvents, surfactants and preservatives such as sodium  
96 methylparaben (Moscoso-Ramírez et al., 2013). Edible films and coatings, mainly constituted  
97 by starch, cellulose derivatives, chitosan/chitin, gums, proteins (animal or vegetable) and  
98 lipids, have been developed as natural or nonpolluting materials to replace commonly used  
99 waxes to extend the shelf-life of fruit, to improve fruit appearance, to reduce moisture losses,  
100 and eventually to incorporate antimicrobial food additives (Aloui et al., 2014; Valencia-  
101 Chamorro et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2016a,b). Chitosan coatings have been widely reported to

102 limit fungal decay and to delay the ripening of several commodities, including dates (Aloui et  
103 al., 2014), table grape (Guerra et al., 2016), and citrus fruit (Panebianco et al., 2014).  
104 Moreover, chitosan-based coatings can be used as a carrier to incorporate functional  
105 ingredients, such as antimicrobials, antioxidant enzymes, minerals, vitamins, and  
106 antioxidants. Locust bean gum (LBG) is a polysaccharide widely used in the production of  
107 edible films/coatings due to its edibility, biodegradability and hydrophilic properties (Barak  
108 and Mudgil, 2014; Sébastien et al., 2014), dissolved in water solutions. LBG in edible films  
109 and coatings may also act as carrier of additives, bioactive compounds (Aloui et al., 2014) and  
110 biocontrol agents (Aloui et al., 2015; Parafati et al., 2016) whose viability over time can be  
111 accordingly extended.

112 To the best of our knowledge, no research has been performed on edible coatings enriched  
113 with PPE in combination with biocontrol yeasts and their application in the postharvest  
114 preservation of oranges. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to: *i*) screen *in vitro* the  
115 antifungal potential of two edible coatings, CH and LBG, enriched with different  
116 combinations of chemically characterized water and methanol PPEs, and *ii*) evaluate the most  
117 effective formulations, enriched or not with BCA *W. anomalus*, on artificially inoculated  
118 oranges, to validate *in vivo* the combined biocontrol strategy.

119

## 120 **2. Materials and methods**

### 121 *2.1. Microorganisms and culture conditions*

122 *Penicillium digitatum* and *Wickerhamomyces anomalus* BS91 strains belong to the Di3A  
123 (Dipartimento di Agricoltura, Alimentazione e Ambiente, University of Catania, Italy)  
124 collection. *W. anomalus* was previously selected for its good antagonistic ability related to  $\beta$ -  
125 glucanase production (Muccilli et al., 2013; Parafati et al., 2016). More recently, bioactive

126 coatings enriched with *W. anomalus* BS91, exhibited a good control of *P. digitatum* on  
127 mandarin and orange (Aloui et al., 2015; Parafati et al., 2016).

128 The mold and yeast stock cultures were stored at 4 °C on Petri dishes containing, respectively,  
129 Potato Dextrose Agar (PDA, CM0139, Oxoid, Basingstoke, UK) and Yeast Extract Peptone  
130 Dextrose Agar [YPDA: yeast extract, 10 g; peptone, 10 g; dextrose, 20 g; agar, 20 g (Oxoid,  
131 Basingstoke, UK) per liter of sterile distilled water (SDW)].

132

### 133 2.2. *Preparation of CH and LBG films carrying pomegranate peel extract (PPE)*

134 The chitosan (CH) film forming solution was prepared by dissolving CH (1%, w/v) in an  
135 aqueous glacial acetic acid solution (1%, v/v), at 40 °C for 12 h. The Locust bean gum (LBG)  
136 film forming solution was prepared by dissolving the LBG powder (molecular weight ~  
137 310,000 Da, Sigma Aldrich, Steinheim, Germany) in distilled water (0.5%, w/v) at 70 °C  
138 under constant agitation. Twenty % (w/w, based on biopolymer content) of glycerol ( $\geq$  99%  
139 purity; Sigma-Aldrich, Steinheim, Germany) was used as a plasticizer to enhance the film  
140 flexibility and facilitate its release from the Petri plate.

141 The CH and LBG film forming solutions were modified by adding different amounts of  
142 either a water pomegranate peel extract (WPPE) or a methanol pomegranate peel extract  
143 (MPPE) (see Table 1), which had been prepared according to the procedure reported by  
144 Karchoufi et al. (2018).

145

### 146 2.3. *In vitro antifungal activity of active films carrying PPE*

147 Ten mL of each active film forming solution (Table 1) was poured into Petri plates, and  
148 dried at room temperature for approximately 48 h to produce films with a controlled

149 thickness. The films were then sterilely peeled off the Petri plates and preconditioned in  
150 climatic chamber at 25 °C and 75% RH, prior to testing.

151 Disks of each film (4 mm diameter) were cut and placed on PDA plates, which had been  
152 previously spray-inoculated with a conidial suspension of *P. digitatum* (adjusted at a final  
153 concentration of  $10^6$  conidia/mL by an hemocytometer), and incubated at 25 °C for 6 days.

154 The antifungal activity was expressed as the average diameter size (mm) of fungal growth  
155 inhibition zones around the bioactive film disks. The experiment was performed in triplicate  
156 and repeated twice.

157

#### 158 2.4. *W. anomalus* tolerance to active films carrying PPE

159 The potential application of BCA *W. anomalus* to active films containing PPEs has been  
160 evaluated through a preliminary test. A disk of each dried active film (4 mm diameter),  
161 including either WPPE or MPPE, as described in Table 1, was cut and placed on a YPDA  
162 medium which had been previously inoculated according to the pour plate method with a 48-  
163 h cell suspension of *W. anomalus* (final concentration  $10^6$  cells/mL), to test the influence of  
164 the active films on the growth of *W. anomalus*. The plates were incubated at 25 °C for 72 h.

165 The growth inhibitory activity was expressed as the average diameter size (mm) of *W.*  
166 *anomalus* growth inhibition zones around the bioactive film disks. The experiment was  
167 performed in triplicate and repeated twice.

168

#### 169 2.5. *Evaluation of active coatings for the control of green mold decay of wounded oranges*

170 The active coating formulations showing the best performance *in vitro* against green mold  
171 and affecting less the growth of *W. anomalus* were used alone and in combination with *W.*  
172 *anomalus* cells (Table 2) to conduct *in vivo* biocontrol tests on oranges which had been  
173 artificially inoculated with *P. digitatum*.

174 The yeast suspension in SDW was prepared by collecting the *W. anomalus* BS91 cells  
175 grown in YPD [yeast extract, 10 g; peptone, 10 g; dextrose, 20 g (Oxoid, Basingstoke, UK)  
176 per liter of SDW] for 48 h at 25 °C. The yeast suspension was incorporated into CH and LBG  
177 film forming solutions at a temperature of 30 °C to achieve a final concentration of  $10^8$   
178 cells/mL.

179 Oranges were purchased from a local organic supermarket and used within 24 h from  
180 purchase. Fruits of similar size and without injuries or rot were selected for the experiments. .  
181 Prior to coating, the selected oranges were washed with tap water, their surface disinfected by  
182 immersion in a 11.5 g/L NaOCl solution for 3 min, rinsed with SDW and air-dried. Oranges  
183 were then artificially wounded (4 wounds per fruit) with a sterile needle (3 mm diameter  $\times$  3  
184 mm deep). Twenty  $\mu$ l of a *P. digitatum* spore suspension ( $10^5$  conidia/mL) was inoculated into  
185 each wound and dried at room temperature for 3 h to produce artificial infections. Fruits were  
186 then dipped in different coating solutions for 2 min and air-dried at room temperature.  
187 Uncoated oranges inoculated with *P. digitatum* were used as a control. Film coated oranges  
188 were placed in a sealed plastic box to maintain a high relative humidity (90% RH) and  
189 incubated at 26 °C. After 5 days of incubation, data concerning disease incidence (DI),  
190 disease severity (DS) and lesion diameter (LD) were measured. In detail, DS was evaluated  
191 by using an empirical 1-to-4 rating scale: 1 = no visible symptoms (0%); 2 = soft rot (35%); 3  
192 = mycelium (65%); 4 = sporulation (90%) before analysis of variance. Average fruit disease  
193 severity index was calculated as reported by Parafati et al. (2015). Lesion diameter (LD) was  
194 also assessed by measuring the average diameter of the damaged area five days after pathogen  
195 inoculation.

196

197 2.6. *Statistical Analysis*

198 All statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical package software Minitab™  
199 version 16.0.

200 One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to determine statistical significant  
201 ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences among inhibition size mean values of *P. digitatum* growth for the *in*  
202 *vitro* assay by the Duncan's Multiple Range test.

203 In all repeated *in vivo* experiments, DI, DS and LD were calculated, averaging the values  
204 determined for the single replicates of each treatment. Within the same disease parameter (DI,  
205 DS, and LD) the significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences (mean separation) between treatments were  
206 determined by the Duncan's Multiple Range test.

207

### 208 **3. Results and discussion**

#### 209 *3.1 In vitro* evaluation of the *antifungal effectiveness of active coatings*

210 In the present study the use of bioactive CH and LBG coatings, enriched with MPPE and  
211 WPPE was evaluated by means of *in vitro* assays against *P. digitatum*. Among plant-derived  
212 compounds, PPE, sourced from a largely available industrial byproduct, has gained attention  
213 for its antioxidant and antimicrobial properties (Tehraniifar et al., 2011). The extracts used in  
214 the study were characterized to determine the total phenol content and profile (Kharchoufi et  
215 al., 2018), and the results demonstrated the presence of punicalagin as major component,  
216 which is an ellagitannin known for its antifungal activity (Glazer et al., 2012; Romeo et al.,  
217 2015).

218 Data from the antifungal assays, performed on PDA plates, showed that bioactive CH and  
219 LBG coatings, enriched with PPEs, significantly inhibited the growth of *P. digitatum* by  
220 producing an inhibition halo around the experimental bioactive film disks, which got larger at  
221 increasing WPPE or MPPE concentrations. Overall, the highest effectiveness was obtained  
222 using CH-ME3 and CH-WE3, which produced the widest inhibition zones (Table 3). Among

223 the LBG coatings, only LBG-ME3 or –WE3 and LBG-ME2 or –WE2 produced significant  
224 inhibition halos on PDA inoculated with a *P. digitatum* conidial suspension, while no  
225 inhibition was observed in the control as well as in the formulation with the lowest PPE  
226 concentration (Table 3). These results are consistent with previous reports on the *in vitro*  
227 antifungal effect of PPE (Glazer et al., 2012; Kharchoufi et al., 2018; Osorio et al., 2010). It  
228 should be noted that neither LBG nor CH alone produced inhibition halos around the film  
229 sample; however, the growth of the mycelium was not observed in the contact area between  
230 CH and the agar medium, proving some intrinsic inhibitory activity of chitosan.  
231 This effect was not observed for LBG alone, which, in fact, allowed the mycelium growth in  
232 the area of contact with the inoculated medium.

233

### 234 3.2. Influence of bioactive coatings on *W. anomalus* growth

235 With the aim to develop an integrated biological control approach to effectively manage  
236 postharvest *P. digitatum* decay *in vivo*, the opportunity to add a proved BCA, *W. anomalus*  
237 BS91, to the bioactive WPPE- and MPPE- coatings was evaluated by a preliminary *in vitro*  
238 assay. Such preliminary screening excluded any significant inhibition activity of the bioactive  
239 coatings, which caused weak growth inhibition (halo of 2 mm), only at the highest MPPE  
240 (0.304 g dry extract/mL) concentration. WPPE at all concentrations and MPPE at lower  
241 concentrations did not produce any appreciable inhibition effect against *W. anomalus* cells,  
242 nor did CH and LBG alone (no inhibition halo). Only few data regarding the effect of PPE  
243 against yeasts are available. The combination of punicalagin, identified as the main active  
244 antifungal compound of an hydro alcoholic extract prepared from the peel of *Punica*  
245 *granatum*, with fluconazole produced a potently synergistic action, by inducing ultrastructural  
246 changes against *Candida albicans* cells *in vitro* (Endo et al., 2010). The antifungal effects of  
247 pomegranate pericarp and peel extracts, attributed to changes in cell morphology and

248 structure, were demonstrated against yeasts of the *Candida* genus (Anibal et al., 2013).  
249 Moreover, the crude extract of pomegranate peel showed activity against the dermatophytes  
250 *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*, *Trichophyton rubrum*, *Microsporum canis*, and *Microsporum*  
251 *gypseum*, with Minimum Inhibitory Concentrations (MICs) values of 125 µg/mL and 250  
252 µg/mL, respectively for each genus (Foss et al., 2014). With regard to the effect of PPEs on  
253 food-related yeasts, the results obtained in this study are in agreement with those recently  
254 reported on *S. cerevisiae* (Kharchoufi et al., 2018). A possible explanation for this behavior  
255 could be attributed to the isolation source of *W. anomalus* BS91, the olive brine, which is  
256 particularly rich in plant polyphenols: this condition might have determined some adaptation  
257 of the BCA *W. anomalus* to such compounds. Moreover, additional experimental evidence  
258 proved that plant-derived bioactive compounds can extend the lifespan and improve  
259 resistance to oxidative stress in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (Martorell et al., 2011).

260

### 261 3.3. Evaluation of CH and LBG coatings incorporating WPPE for the control of green 262 mold decay on oranges

263 The *in vitro* assays demonstrated the effectiveness of CH and LBG coatings containing  
264 WPPE and MPPE against *P. digitatum* and excluded any interference on the growth of *W.*  
265 *anomalus*. On the basis of such results and in consideration of the fact that food-grade and  
266 environmentally-sustainable extraction methods from plant materials should be preferred,  
267 especially for their use as food supplement/additive (Kharchoufi et al., 2018), water  
268 pomegranate peel extract (WPPE) was selected for the subsequent *in vivo* trials on artificially  
269 pathogen-inoculated oranges.

270 The results of the biocontrol activity of CH and LBG- active coatings on oranges, which had  
271 been artificially inoculated with *P. digitatum*, are reported in Fig.1 and Fig. 2, respectively.

272 Both CH and LBG coatings incorporating 0.361 g dry WPPE/mL and *W. anomalus* cells

273 significantly reduced green mold decay parameters (DI, DS and LD) on oranges, providing  
274 always significantly lower values if compared to the relative controls (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).  
275 Based on the widely reported role of phenolic compounds as plant defense response inducer  
276 (Oliveira et al., 2016), it is likely that the postharvest application of PPE on fruit could induce  
277 mechanisms of resistance against fungal pathogens (Li Destri Nicosia et al., 2016).

278 Among chitosan coatings (Fig. 1), CH-WE3-Wa displayed the highest *in vivo* effectiveness at  
279 reducing DI, DS and LD values on wounded oranges (95, 98 and 100% of reduction,  
280 respectively, compared to the relative control), followed by the CH-WE3 treatment (49, 65  
281 and 92% of reduction, respectively, compared to the relative control). The coating treatment  
282 with CH only determined an inferior reduction in the green mold decay parameters (10, 16  
283 and 11% of reduction, respectively, compared to the relative control), as previously reported  
284 in literature (Panebianco et al., 2014; Panebianco et al., 2016; Tayel et al., 2016). This effect  
285 could be due to the morphological and structural modifications induced by chitosan on fungal  
286 hyphae (Singh et al., 2008) and/or to the elicitation of biochemical defense responses in  
287 coated fruit (El Guilli et al., 2016).

288 Similarly, among the essayed LBG coatings (Fig. 2) the highest effectiveness in reducing DI,  
289 DS and LD values on wounded oranges was observed for the LBG-WE3-Wa combination  
290 (75, 92 and 98% of reduction, respectively, compared to the relative control), followed by the  
291 LBG-WE3 treatment (28, 69 and 85% of reduction, respectively, compared to the relative  
292 control). Orange coating comprising only LBG did not determine any appreciable reduction in  
293 the green mold decay in comparison with the relative control.

294 Overall, the highest reductions of the green mold diseases parameters were obtained by using  
295 CH-WE3-Wa followed by LBG-WE3-Wa (Fig. 3), which almost completely inhibited rot  
296 development on oranges.

297 The demonstrated efficacy of PPEs *in vivo* is consistent with the results reported by Li Destri

298 Nicosia et al. (2016) who observed that the treatment with PPE at 12 g/L on lemons, 6 h after  
299 pathogen inoculation, resulted in the reduction of *P. digitatum* infection by 76%, while a level  
300 of 1.2 g/L determined a reduction of 46.7%. On grapefruit, PPE at 12 or 1.2 g/L reduced *P.*  
301 *digitatum* infection by 68.9% and 44.8%, respectively. Furthermore, the addition of *W. anomalus* BS91 yeast, with a proved efficacy against *P. digitatum* on citrus fruit (Platania et al., 2012; Aloui et al., 2015; Parafati et al., 2016), to the CH and LBG bioactive coatings,  
302 always boosted the activity against *P. digitatum* on orange fruit, allowing the largest  
303 reductions of decay parameters.  
304  
305

306

#### 307 4. Conclusions

308 Since harvested fruit and vegetables are of high value, the development of integrated and  
309 increasing efficient control strategies which can reduce the loss of products is still a research  
310 priority.

311 The present study provides evidence of the high potential of bioactive CH and LBG  
312 coatings enriched with WPPE as a natural, safe and eco-friendly postharvest control strategy.  
313 The WPPE incorporated in edible coating matrices determined a good level of inhibition of  
314 green mold on artificially inoculated oranges. Such results are very promising, especially in  
315 consideration of the fact that the conditions evaluated in the study are by far worse than those  
316 normally occurring during the postharvest life, both in terms of fruit injury degree and  
317 pathogen inoculum level. In addition, the results proved, for the first time, the antifungal  
318 effectiveness of WPPE in combination with biocontrol yeast *W. anomalus*. The tolerance of  
319 yeasts to pomegranate bioactive compounds is a feature which could be exploited in various  
320 fields, such as the production of fermented foods, where bioactive compounds extracted from  
321 pomegranate peel could replace potentially harmful synthetic preservatives. Moreover, the

322 specific tolerance of biocontrol yeast *W. anomalus* BS91 to PPE, opens interesting strategies  
323 in the integrated management of postharvest decay and foreseeing advances in the  
324 development of new formulations which leverage on the synergy between biocontrol agents  
325 and natural bioactive compounds.

326

### 327 **Aknowledgements**

328

329 International mobility of Samira Kharcoufi was supported by the European Union funding  
330 (PASRI).

331

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- 468

469 **Table 1**470 Bioactive film formulations used in the *in vitro* experiments.

Coating code	Composition
CH	Chitosan
CH-WE1	chitosan + 0.072 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
CH-WE2	chitosan + 0.180 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
CH-WE3	chitosan + 0.361 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
CH-ME1	chitosan + 0.061 g dry methanol pomegranate peel extract/mL
CH-ME2	chitosan + 0.152 g dry methanol pomegranate peel extract/mL
CH-ME3	chitosan + 0.304 g dry methanol pomegranate peel extract/mL
LBG	locust bean gum
LBG-WE1	locust bean gum + 0.072 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
LBG-WE2	locust bean gum + 0.180 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
LBG-WE3	locust bean gum + 0.361 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
LBG-ME1	locust bean gum + 0.061 g dry methanol pomegranate peel extract/mL
LBG-ME2	locust bean gum + 0.152 g dry methanol pomegranate peel extract/mL
LBG-ME3	locust bean gum + 0.304 g dry methanol pomegranate peel extract/mL

471

472

473 **Table 2**474 Bioactive coating formulations essayed in the *in vivo* test on oranges.

Coating code	Composition
CH	Chitosan
CH-WE3	chitosan + 0.361 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
CH-WE3-Wa	chitosan + 0.361 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL + $10^8$ cell/mL <i>W. anomalus</i>
LBG	locust bean gum
LBG-WE3	locust bean gum + 0.361 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL
LBG-WE3-Wa	locust bean gum + 0.361 g dry water pomegranate peel extract/mL + $10^8$ cell/mL <i>W. anomalus</i>

475

476

**Table 3**Growth inhibition size (mm) of *P. digitatum* by different bioactive coatings.

Bioactive formulation	Inhibition size (mm)	Bioactive formulation	Inhibition size (mm)
CH	0.0 ± 0.00f *	LBG	0.0 ± 0.00e*
CH-WE1	0.5 ± 0.29e	LBG-WE1	0.3 ± 0.25e
CH-WE2	1.3 ± 0.14d	LBG-WE2	1.0 ± 0.00cd
CH-WE3	3.1 ± 0.13b	LBG-WE3	2.3 ± 0.14b
CH-ME1	1.3 ± 0.29d	LBG-ME1	0.5 ± 0.29de
CH-ME2	2.1 ± 0.13c	LBG-ME2	1.3 ± 0.14c
CH-ME3	4.1 ± 0.13a	LBG-ME3	3.3 ± 0.14a

478 Data are presented as mean of 3 replicate ± SE. Among bioactive formulation (CH or LBG) inhibition size  
 479 values followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to Duncan's test ( $p < 0.05$ ). \* It  
 480 should be noticed that, even though neither of the films produced a visible halo around the disk sample, CH,  
 481 unlike LBG, inhibited the fungal growth in the area of contact with the agar medium.

483 **Figure legends**

484

485 **Fig. 1.** Biocontrol effectiveness of chitosan coating incorporating 0.361 g dry WPPE /mL,  
486 alone or in combination with *W. anomalus* cells, against *Penicillium digitatum* on oranges.  
487 For treatments codification, please refer to Table 2. Bars indicate standard error of the mean.  
488 Columns within each disease parameter (DI: disease incidence; DS: disease severity; LD:  
489 lesion diameter) followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to  
490 Duncan's test ( $p < 0.05$ ).

491

492 **Fig. 2.** Biocontrol effectiveness of LBG coating incorporating 0.361 g dry WPPE /mL, alone  
493 or in combination with *W. anomalus* cells, against *Penicillium digitatum* on oranges. For  
494 treatments codification, please refer to Table 2. Bars indicate standard error of the mean.  
495 Columns within each disease parameter (DI: disease incidence; DS: disease severity; LD:  
496 lesion diameter) followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to  
497 Duncan's test ( $p < 0.05$ ).

498

499 **Fig. 3.** Visual effect of the application of CH and LBG coatings, incorporating 0.361 g dry  
500 WPPE/mL and  $10^8$  cells/mL *W. anomalus*, on oranges artificially inoculated with *Penicillium*  
501 *digitatum* after incubation at 26 °C for 5 days.

502

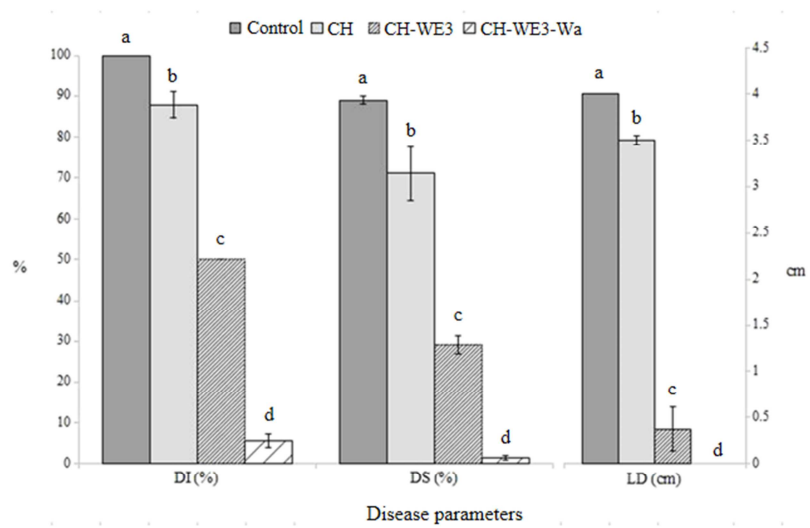


Fig. 1

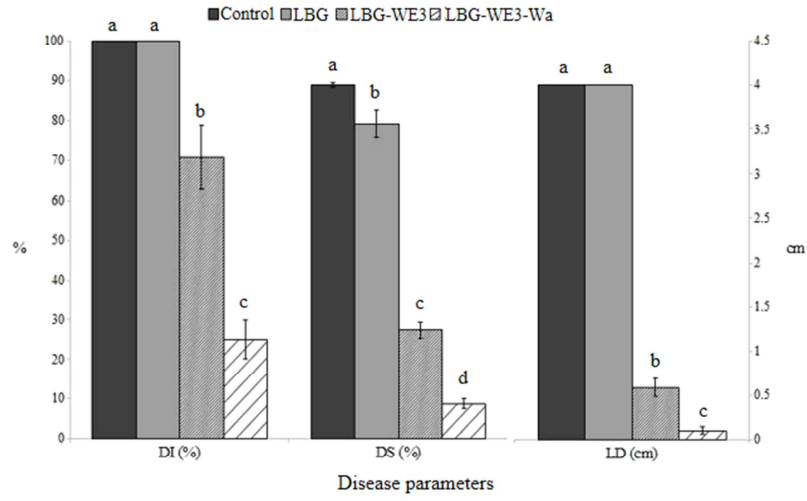


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

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## Highlights

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- Coatings carrying standardized pomegranate peel extract (PPE) inhibited *P. digitatum*
- Bioactive coatings reduced decay parameters on oranges inoculated with *P. digitatum*
- Biocontrol yeast *Wickerhamomyces anomalus* proved to be tolerant to PPE
- Coatings combining PPE with *W. anomalus* cells showed enhanced biocontrol efficacy

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