

TOXIGENIC POTENTIAL OF STAPHYLOCOCCUS SPP. ISOLATED FROM MINAS FRESCAL CHEESES

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Contamination of milk and milk products with enterotoxigenic staphylococci mainly *S. aureus* is a significant problem worldwide. Time and temperature abuses of a contaminated product can lead to enterotoxin production, which can produce food-borne poisoning when the product is ingested. In this study PCR was performed for 10 staphylococcal enterotoxins (SE) genes (sea through see), and *tst-1* in 117 *Staphylococcus* isolated from 12 brands of Minas frescal cheeses, commercialized in Juiz de Fora, Brazil. The bacteria isolates were first characterized by Gram staining, hemolytic properties, coagulase, catalase and acetoin production. Forty five were coagulase-negative staphylococci and 70 were coagulase-positive. All coagulase-positive were confirmed as *S. aureus* by PCR for *femA*. SE genes and *tst-1* were not found in any coagulase-negative staphylococci. Of the 70 *S. aureus*, 51 (72.9%) were positive for at least one of the 11 genes, and 17 distinct genotypes of toxin genes were observed. The occurrence of exclusively more recently described SE genes (*seg* - *see*) was considerably higher (39 PCR-positive strains) than classical SE genes (*sea*-*see*, 12 strains).

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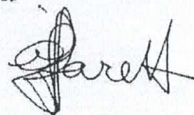
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