
**DETERMINATION SOME OF HEAVY METALS IN
TRADITIONAL FOOD IN NORTH AFRICA
LIBYA AND EGYPT**

[3]

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ABSTRACT

Thirty samples of ready traditional food were used in the present study, collected randomly from five different local markets (Faba bean, Falafel and Koshari), Abbasiya area, Nasr city, Ramses area, Ghamra area and Heliopolis at Cairo governorate . Also, five different traditional foods (Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin) from local markets, In industrial area, Alhoreeh area, Almokhtar area, Albelad area, and Tobruk center at Tobruk city. The content of heavy metals, Pb, Cd and Al in traditional food samples were determined using atomic absorption spectrometry (AAS). The results showed a significant variation in the concentration of these metals in Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari collected from different market at Cairo gov. The highest Pb level in Faba beans (0.74 mg/Kg) was found in Ramses sample. Aluminium (Al) content was recorded a high significant concentration in all traditional food samples and the highest concentration of Al was detected in Falafel (2.1 mg/kg) collected from Ghamra area. The results showed that the heavy metal contents in Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin that collected from Tobruk city. The highest Pb and Al levels in two Bazin samples (0.61 and 1.09 mg/kg) were in samples from Almokhtar and Alhoreeh sites. All samples of traditional food (Faba bean, Falafel and Koshari) collected from Egypt in local markets and (Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin) collected from Libyan local markets were free of cadmium contamination.

Keywords: Heavy Metals, Contamination, Couscous, Koshari, Aluminium (Al).

INTRODUCTION

Food safety is a major public concern worldwide. During the last decades, the increasing demand for food safety has stimulated research regarding the risk associated with consumption of foodstuffs contaminated by pesticides, heavy metals and/or toxins (D’Mello, 2003). Aluminum is present in drinking water at usual levels of less than 0.2mg/L, and is also present in most foods naturally (normally at levels of less than 5 mg/kg) or due to the use of aluminum cooking utensils and foil (Saiyed and Yokel., 2005).

Nasreddine *et al* (2006) had evaluated the dietary exposure of an adult urban population to three heavy metals (lead, cadmium and mercury) and to radionuclides. Exposure assessment was performed by means of the total diet study approach as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Five ‘total diets’ were collected during 2003–04. Average and maximal consumer exposure estimates to heavy metals were calculated and compared with appropriate reference values and with intakes reported from other countries. The average dietary intakes of lead, cadmium and mercury represented 7, 17 and 5.6%, respectively, of the appropriate provisional tolerable weekly intakes (PTWI). The mean dietary intake of methyl mercury represented 17.5% of the appropriate PTWI. Cs-134 and I-131 were not detected in any of the food samples. Traces of Cs-137 were only found in five food samples.

Lead is toxic heavy metal, Water and food are the most important sources of human exposure to lead, a product from the combustion of fuel and industrial waste emitted into the air and then deposition in soil and surface water then to plants and agricultural crops. Stipulates (LNCSM: 594/ 2009) that the level of lead in food produced from cereals and legumes should not exceed to 0.2mg/kg.

Analyzed by Perkin Elmer Plasma 400 emission spectrometer for the determination of lead, cadmium, copper, zinc and aluminum in ready to eat chicken shawarma (Mohamed and Nosier, 2009). The obtained results showed that the average value of Pb, Cd, Cu, Zn and Al were 1.484-1.771, 0.338 - 0.435, 2.854 -2.642, 24.422-11.032 and 155.113-68.777 ppm respectively. High levels of aluminum and lead were determined in samples as contamination and preparation methods of shawarma played an important role in the presence of high levels of heavy metals which considered to be a risky health hazard.

Heavy metals may be present in agricultural soils at low levels but can be accumulated by plant over a period. So, researchers all over the world to study the pollution with heavy metals of air, water, and foods to avoid their harmful effects and to determine their suitability for human consumption (Naeem *et al.*, 2009.; Nkansah and Sarojam and Chen, 2010).

In the roasted plantain in the low income area had the highest level of contaminants such as Pb, Cd, Zn and Fe. The lowest value was in the high income area (Opeolu *et al.*, 2010) . Lead levels ranged between 0.2-1.25 µg/g with the highest value observed at the low income, high population density and high traffic area. Cd, Zn and Fe levels also followed a similar trend in the

other three States. They ranged between 0.48-18.3 $\mu\text{g/g}$, 2.0-4.5 $\mu\text{g/g}$ and 0.4-13.5 $\mu\text{g/g}$ respectively. It is opined that the pollution sources for the roasted plantain and maize include those from emissions from leaded gasoline.

Lead contamination has been analyzed in 104 of the representative food items in the Saudi diet and to estimate the dietary lead intake of Saudi Arabians. Three samples of each selected food items were purchased from the local markets of Riyadh city, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Each pooled sample was analyzed in triplicate by ICP-AES after thorough homogenization. Sweets (0.011-0.199 $\mu\text{g/g}$), vegetables (0.002-0.195 $\mu\text{g/g}$), legumes (0.014-0.094 $\mu\text{g/g}$), eggs (0.079 $\mu\text{g/g}$), meat and meat products (0.013-0.068 $\mu\text{g/g}$) were the richest sources of lead. Considering the amounts of each food consumed, the major food sources of lead intake for Saudi can be arranged as follows: vegetables (25.4%), cereal and cereal products (24.2%), beverages (9.7%) sweets (8.2%), legumes (7.4%), fruits (5.4%) milk and milk products (5.1%). The results showed that the daily intakes of lead according to the two sources are 22.7 and 24.5 $\mu\text{g/person/day}$ respectively (Al- Othman, 2010).

The joint FAO/WHO, 2011 Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA, 2011) established the Provisional Tolerable Weekly Intake (PTWI) for Al of 7.0 mg per kg bodyweight in 1989. The JECFA re-evaluated the safety of aluminum and lowered the PTWI to 1.0 mg per kg body weight because of the potential for Al to affect the reproductive and nervous system in experimental animals in 2007. However, the JECFA revised the PTWI to 2.0 mg per kg body weight in 2011 (Joint FAO/WHO ECFA, 2011) as a result of new bioavailability and toxicological data (Poirier *et al.*, 2011).

Heavy metals toxicity can affect mental development and central nervous system functions alter the blood composition and disturb the function of organs like kidneys, lungs and liver (Filon *et al.*, 2013.;Hajeb and Sloth, 2014). Cadmium (Cd) is one of the most toxic elements in world and human exposure can result in the development of various diseases, Cd can accumulate in the body with a half-life 10 to 30 years. Lead (Pb) and Cd are highly toxic elements, which quickly absorbed from the alimentary trace. Afterwards, they easily pass through biological barriers and accumulation in internal organs. Even small amounts of Pb and Cd may cause metabolic disorders. Food contamination is generally defined as foods that are spoiled or tainted because they either contain microorganisms, such as bacteria or parasites, or toxic substances that make them unfit for consumption. A food contaminant can be biological, chemical or physical in nature, with the former being more common. Chemical food contaminants that can enter the food supply chain include pesticides, heavy metals, and other alien chemical agents (Malik, 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials: Thirty samples of ready traditional food Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari were used in the present study, collected by a simple random sampling method from five different local markets at Cairo governorate in Egypt and five different local markets Coucous, Mbcabach and Bazin from Tobruk city in Libya. Five Kilograms cooked traditional food samples were collected from every local markets “Egypt and Libya” in sterile plastic bags in Ice-Box during transportation to the laboratory, according to (Cheesbrough, 1984), for a period of two months in autumn (2016).

- Falafel: fried patties from minced mixture of dehulled faba bean, onion, leek, herpes and spices.
- Faba beans: included of cooked whole Faba beans and salt.
- Koshari: formed of cooked rice, macaroni, whole lentil, tomato sauce and fried onion.
- Couscous: composed of milled wheat cooked on the steam with lamb meat broth, onion, tomato, chick pean,salt and spices (Diari made in Tunisia).
- Mbcabach: included of cooked pasta with meat, onion, tomato, salt and spices (Spaga made in Tunisia) .
- Bazin: composed of barley flour cooked in water and salt (Local producer).
- All samples were cooked at 100°C except Falafel was fried at 175-180°C.

Methods: About 1 g of accurately weighed dry samples (at 70°C overnight) of the collected samples were boiled in 50mL of deionized tridistilled water acidified with 1 mL concentrated nitric acid, (Juranovic *et al.*, 2013). The samples evaporated till reach less than 25 mL. The infusions were cooled and accurately poured into 50 mL volumetric flasks and completed to the mark with deionized water. Single sample of each sample was digested in nitric acid + hydrogen peroxide mixture and diluted with deionized water to 50 mL for comparison measurements. Determination of heavy metals in traditional food samples were performed according to the method of (AOAC, 1995).

All chemicals and standards are of Analytical grade. Metals stock standards of, Pb, Cd and Al were obtained from Merck, Darmstadt, Germany (1000 mg/L).

The recovery and reproducibility of the method was tested continuously by clean samples with each of the metals at concentration levels ranged between 0.03 and 0.05 mg/kg and treated. The performance of the AAS was frequently tested by measuring the characteristic mass. The average recoveries for digested samples ranged between 88% and 95%. The average recoveries for infusions ranged between 50% and 65%. Blank Samples were analyzed with every set of samples and the detection limits (i.e., the concentration produces an absorbance signal three times the magnitude of the baseline noise 3σ (Beaty and Kerber, 1993) were estimated for each measured metal.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data analysis by two modeles, one way analysis of variance $Y_{ij} = M + Loci + e_{ij}$, and two way analysis with interaction by (SAS, 2006) program at ($P < 0.05$), $Y_{ijk} = M + loci + Pestiij + (Loc * Pesti)_{ij} + e_{ijk}$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Detection of heavy metals in traditional food samples collected from local markets at Cairo and Tobruk cities

Detection of heavy metals in 15 food samples cooked (Faba beans, Falafel and koshari) samples collected from some local Egyptian markets (Abbasiya area, Nasr city, Ramsis area, Ghamra area and Heliopolois) in Cairo governorate.

Data in Tables (1) and Fig (1 to 3) demonstrated the average concentrations of metals in 15 samples of traditional food (Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari). Some samples were contaminated with different

amounts of heavy metals. Each of those was contaminated with one or more of heavy metals.

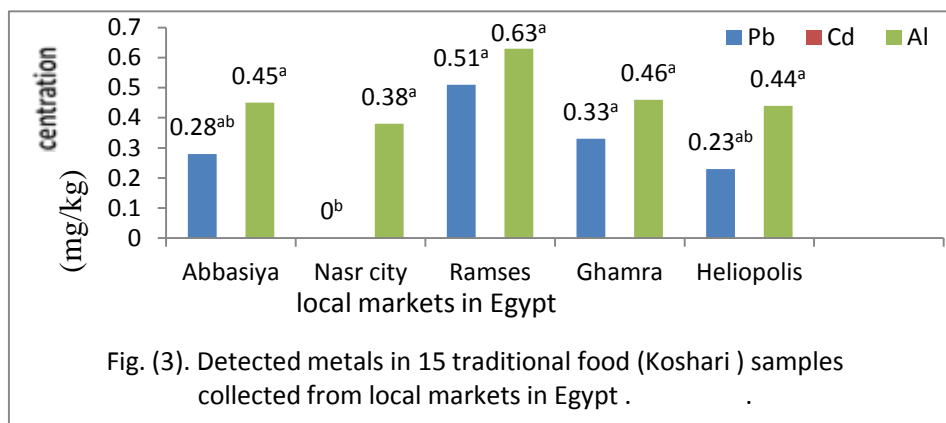
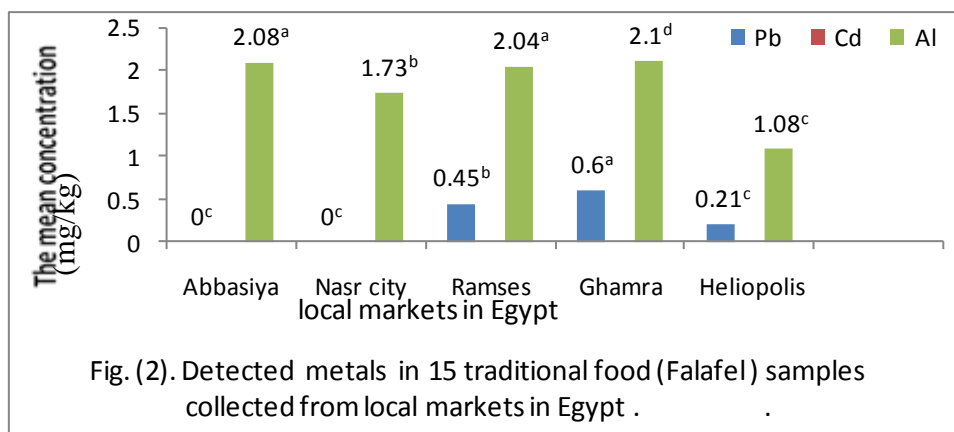
Table (1): Detection of metals (mg/kg of dry weight) in 15 traditional food(Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari) samples collected from Egypt .

Heavy metals	Samples location					
	Traditional food	Abbasiya area (mg/kg)	Nasr city (mg/kg)	Ramses area (mg/kg)	Ghamra area (mg/kg)	Heliopolis (mg/kg)
Pb	Faba beans	N.D ^d	0.34 ^b	0.74 ^a	0.33 ^b	0.21 ^c
Cd		N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D
Al		1.48 ^a	0.47 ^c	1.81 ^b	1.32 ^a	0.73 ^b
Pb	Falafel	N.D ^c	N.D ^c	0.45 ^b	0.60 ^a	N.D ^c
Cd		N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D
Al		2.08 ^a	1.73 ^b	2.04 ^a	2.1 ^d	1.08 ^c
Pb	Koshari	0.28 ^{ab}	N.D ^b	0.51 ^a	0.33 ^a	0.23 ^{ab}
Cd		N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D
Al		0.45 ^a	0.38 ^a	0.63 ^a	0.46 ^a	0.44 ^a

N.D= No detected

The mean values for the content of Pb, Cd and Al in traditional food Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari (expressed in mg/kg of dry weight) represented in Tables (1 and 2) and Fig (1 to 3), respectively. The results showed that, ten samples of traditional food Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari were contaminated with lead. One sample (Faba bean) was free of lead which collected from Abbasiya area, while 4 samples of Faba beans Nasr city, Ramses area, Ghamra area, and Heliopolis were recorded 0.34, 0.74, 0.33 and 0.21 mg/kg of lead, respectively. The highest value in Faba beans collected from Ramses area and there were significant differences at ($P < 0.05$) among the different food samples. Three samples of Falafel in the same Table and Fig(2) collected from Abbasiya area, Nasr city and Heliopolis were free from

lead, while, two samples of Falafel from Ramses area and Ghamra area, recorded (0.45 and 0.6 mg/kg), respectively. However, four samples of Koshari Abbasiya area, Ramses area, Ghamra area, and Heliopolis were detectable 0.28, 0.51 and 0.23 mg/kg of lead, respectively in same Tables and Figure (3).



The mean values of Al in Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari represented in the same Table and Figure (1) of Aluminium. All samples of Faba bean 1.48, 0.47, 1.81, 1.32 and 0.73 mg/kg from Abbasiya, Nasr city, Ramses, Ghamra

and Heliopolis, respectively. Two samples were lower than the standard limitMPL of Faba beans from Nasr city and Heliopolis, and there were significant differences between food samples. Whereas, the highest Al contents were observed in fried Falafel 2.08, 1.73, 2.04, 2.1 and 1.08 mg/kgfrom Abbasiya, Nasr city, Ramses, Ghamra and Heliopolis, respectively. There were significant differences between them and all samples of Falafel were exceeding the MPL of AL 1 mg/kg. The results clearly indicate that the use of aluminum utensils for cooking contributes significantly to the daily intake of aluminum through the cooked foods. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the obtained values considered to be unacceptable. Data in the same Table and Figure (3), illustrates that there were a low level of Al element in Koshari samples. Lower than the maximum level (1mg/kg) and no significant differences ($P < 0.05$), were contained 0.45, 0.38, 0.63, 0.46 and 0.44 mg/kg, respectively. The levels of metals in all samples were lower than the (Abd El-Rahman *et al.* , 2015).

Table(2): Minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, contamination, maximum permissible limits (MPLs) and violation of heavy metals monitored in 15 traditional food (Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari) samples collected from Egypt.

Heavy metals	Traditional food	Range: (Min-Max) (mean \pm SD) (mg/kg)	Contaminated Samples		MPLs (mg/kg)	Violated Samples after purification	
		*N=5	No.	%.		No.	%.
Pb	Faba beans	(0.21-0.74) (0.405 \pm 0.01)	4	80	0.2	3	60
Cd		0	0	0	0.1	0	0
Al		(\pm 0.04)	5	100	1	2	40
Pb	Falafel	(nd-0.6) (0.525 \pm 0.02)	2	40	0.2	2	40
Cd		0	0	0	0.1	0	0
Al		(0.0180 -0.21) (0.0903 \pm 0.03)	5	100	1	2	40
Pb	Koshari	(0.23 -0.51) (0.3375 \pm 0.02)	4	80	0.2	2	40
Cd		0	0	0	0.1	0	0
Al		(0.038 -0.63) (0.1606 \pm 0.02)	5	100	1	1	20

Recommended Max.limit for European Union 2006 Commission Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 and Joint FAO/WHO, 2011

The average concentrations of Aluminum in Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari were 0.04, 0.903 and 0.1606 mg/kg Table (2), respectively. Falafel and Koshari recorded 100% while Faba bean samples were recorded 80%. The high contamination levels found in some vegetables may be related to pollutants in irrigation water, farm soil or pollution from highway traffic. Al content was found to be lower than the standard limit for (EC, 2006) in all samples.

All samples of traditional food Faba beans, Falafel and Koshari were free from any detectable of cadmium.

Detection of heavy metals 15 samples of local Libyan traditional food (Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin) from local markets in Tobruk city

Fifteen samples of traditional food Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin were collected from local markets in Industrial area, Alhoreeh area, Almokhtar area, Albelad area, and Tobruk center at Libya, to detect the contamination of some heavy metals. The mean values of Pb, Cd and Al in Libyan traditional food (expressed in mg/kg of dry weight) were represented in Tables (3,4) and, Fig (4, 5 and 6).

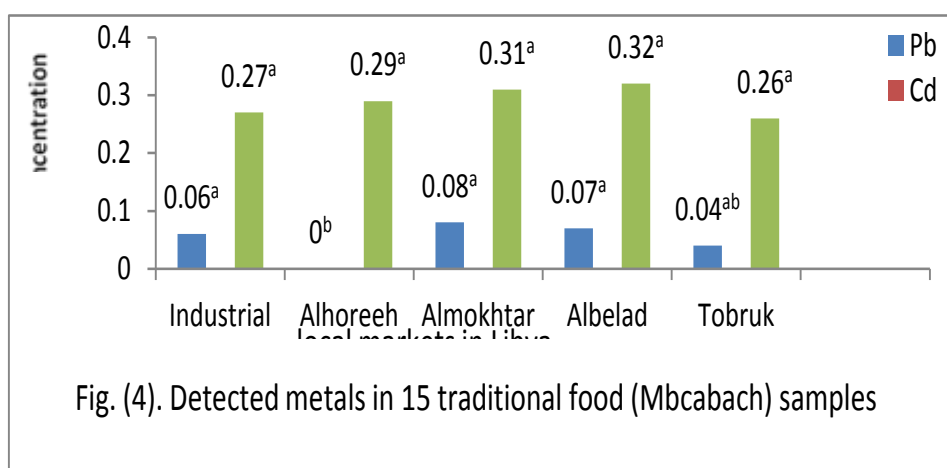
Table (3): Detection of metals (mg/kg of dry weight) in 15 traditional food (Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin) samples collected from libya .

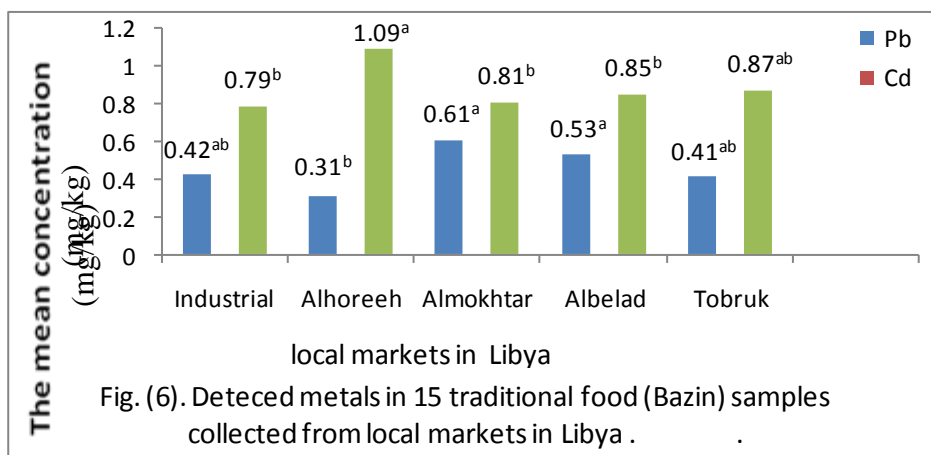
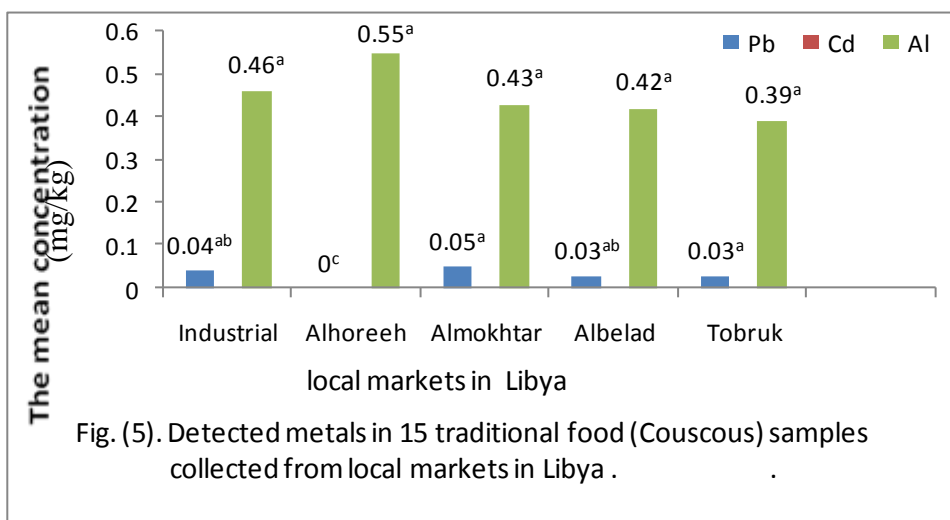
Heavy metals mg/kg	Samples location					
	Traditional food	Industrial	Alhoreeh	Almokhtar	Albelad	Tobruk center
Pb	Mbcabach	0.06a	N.D b	0.08a	0.07a	0.04ab
Cd		N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D
Al		0.27a	0.29a	0.31a	0.32a	0.26a
Pb	Couscous	0.04ab	N.D c	0.05a	0.03ab	0.03a
Cd		N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D
Al		0.46a	0.55a	0.43a	0.42a	0.39a
Pb	Bazin	0.42ab	0.31b	0.61a	0.53a	0.41ab
Cd		N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D	N.D
Al		0.79b	1.09a	0.81b	0.85b	0.87ab

N.D = No Detected

Data in Table (3) and Fig (4) showed concentration of lead (Pb) in samples of traditional food Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin. One sample Mbcabach was free of lead which collected from Alhoreeharea, while, 4

samples of Mbcabach that collected from Industrial area, Almokhtar area, Albelad area and Tobruk center were recorded 0.06, 0.08, 0.07 and 0.04 mg/kg, respectively. These results were least than the LNCSM: 3/ 2008 and showed no significant differences ($P < 0.05$). One samples of Couscous was free of lead which collected from Alhoreeh area, while, 4 samples of Couscous from Industrial area, Almokhtar area, Albelad area and Tobruk center recorded 0.04, 0.05, 0.03 and 0.03 mg/kg of lead, respectively in the same Table and Figure (5). These results were least than the (LNCSM: 609/ 2009 and Joanna *et al.*, 2013) and showed no significant differences at ($P < 0.05$). Five samples of Bazin in the same Table and Figure (6) illustrates that there were a high level of Pb element in Bazin samples than the maximum level (0.2mg/kg) and showed significant differences were detectable of lead 0.42, 0.31, 0.61, 0.53 and 0.41 mg/kg from Industrial area, Alhoreeh area, Almokhtar area, Albelad area and Tobruk center, respectively. These results were the highest than the (LNCSM: 594/ 2009).





The average concentrations of lead in 13 samples of traditional food Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin were 0.0625, 0.0375 and 0.452 mg/kg, respectively in Table (4). Lead contamination of food arises as a result of environmental emissions, such as mining and the now diminished use of leaded petrol. Eight samples of traditional food Mbcabach and Couscous were

lower than the MPL of lead (0.2mg/kg). While, Bazin samples were recorded the highest 100% of lead and exceeding the the MPL.

Table(4): Minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, contamination, maximum permissible limits (MPLs) and violation of heavy metals monitored in 15 traditional food (Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin) samples collected from Libya.

Heavy metals mg/kg	Traditional food	Range: (Min-Max) (mean \pm SD) (mg/kg)	Contaminated Samples		MPLs (mg/kg)	Violated Samples after purification	
		* N=5	No.	%.		No.	%.
Pb	Mbcabach	(0.04-0.08) (0.0625 \pm 0.01)	4	80	0.2	0	0
Cd		0	0	0	0.1	0	0
Al		(0.027-0.32) (0.101 \pm 0.02)	5	100	1	1	20
Pb	Couscous	(0.03-0.05) (0.0375 \pm 0.01)	4	80	0.2	0	0
Cd		0	0	0	0.1	0	0
Al		(0.39-0.55) (0.44 \pm 0.03)	5	100	1	5	100
Pb	Bazin	(0.31-0.61) (0.452 \pm 0.03)	5	100	0.2	5	100
Cd		0	0	0	0.1	0	0
Al		(0.09-0.49) (0.32 \pm 0.04)	5	100	1	4	80

Recommended Max.limit for European Union 2006 Commission Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 and JOINT FAO/WHO, 2011

Data in the same Tables (3,4) and Fig (4, 5 and 6) demonstrated the average concentrations of metals in 15 samples of traditional food Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin. All samples were found to be contaminated with different amounts of Al. Mbcabach sample in the Table (3) and Figure (4)

were 0.27, 0.29, 0.31, 0.32 and 0.26 mg/kg of Aluminum which collected from Industrial area, Alhoreeh area, Almoktar area, Albelad area and Tobruk center, respectively. These results were less than the MPL 1mg/kg and showed significant differences at ($P < 0.05$). While the mean values for the content of Al in Couscous samples in the Table (3) and Figure (5) were 0.46, 0.55, 0.43, 0.42 and 0.39 mg/kg which collected from Industrial area, Alhoreeh area, Almoktar area, Albelad area and Tobruk center, respectively and these results were less than the MPL 1mg/kg and no significant differences at ($P < 0.05$). Five samples of Bazin in the same Table (3) and Figure (6) were recorded 0.79, 1.09, 0.81, 0.85 and 0.87 mg/kg of Al from Industrial area, Alhoreeh area, Almoktar area, Albelad area and Tobruk center, respectively. All samples were lower than the MPL 1mg/kg except one sample from Alhoreeh area and there were no significant differences at ($P < 0.05$) between Bazin samples from Industrial area, Almoktar area and Albelad area. The results indicate that the use of Al utensils for cooking contributes significantly to the daily intake of aluminum through the cooked foods. These results were less than mentioned by Muhammad (Mohamed and Nosier, 2009).

The average concentrations of Al in 15 samples of traditional food Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin were 0.101, 0.44 and 0.32 mg/kg, respectively. All food samples Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin were recorded with Al 80%, 80% and 100%, respectively.

All samples of traditional food (Mbcabach, Couscous and Bazin) were free from any detectable of cadmium.

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تقدير بعض العناصر الثقيلة في بعض الأغذية التقليدية في شمال أفريقيا (ليبيا ومصر)

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المستخلص

استهدفت هذه الدراسة تقدير العناصر الثقيلة في بعض الاغذية التقليدية في كلا من ليبيا ومصر جمع ثلاثون عينة من الطعام التقليدي الجاهز (القول البلدي، الفلافل، الكشري) بطريقة عشوائية من خمس أسواق محلية مختلفة هي منطقة العباسية، مدينة نصر، منطقة رمسيس، منطقة غمرة ومصر الجديدة من محافظة القاهرة في مصر وخمسة أطعمة تقليدية مختلفة (مببكه، كسكسي وبازين) من الأسواق المحلية هي المنطقة الصناعية ومنطقة الحرية ومنطقة المختار ومنطقة البلاد وطبرق المركز من مدينة طبرق في ليبيا. تم تحديد محتوى العناصر الثقيلة الرصاص، الكاديوم والالومنيوم في عينات الطعام التقليدية باستخدام مطياف الامتصاص الذري (AAS). أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن هناك تبايناً كبيراً في تركيز هذه العناصر الثقيلة في القول البلدي، الفلافل والكشري التي تم جمعها من مواقع مختلفة في القاهرة. تم الحصول على أعلى مستوى معنوي للرصاص Pb في القول البلدي (٠,٧٤ مجم / كجم) في عينة رمسيس. كان محتوى الألومنيوم (Al) عالي التركيز في جميع عينات الطعام التقليدية وتم الكشف عن أعلى تركيز للالومنيوم Al في الفلافل (٢,١ مجم/ كجم) التي تم جمعها من منطقة غمرة. وأظهرت النتائج أن محتوى العناصر الثقيلة في مببكه وكسكسي وبازين التي جمعت من مدينة طبرق. أعلى مستويات للرصاص Pb والالومنيوم Al كانت في عيني البازين (٠,٦١ - ١,٠٩ مجم/كجم) من مواقع المختار والحرية. جميع العينات (القول البلدي، الفلافل والكشري) التي تم جمعها من الاسواق المحلية المصرية و(المببكه، الكسكسي و البازين) التي جمعت من الاسواق المحلية الليبية كانت خالية من التلوث بعنصر الكاديوم Cd.

كلمات البحث: العناصر الثقيلة، التلوث، الكسكس، الكشري، الألومنيوم.