

## APPENDIX A

### Standard Operating Protocol: Food Preparation and Storage

Preparation of food was conducted in the staff pantry of the gynecological ward of University Malaya Medical Centre. The investigator was required to wash his hands prior to preparation of the food items. He was also required to wear a mask and gloves during the process of the food preparation. Each food items were only prepared when there were participants recruited to preserve the freshness of the items.

#### Preparation and storage of watermelon:

- i. Washed under clean running water prior to preparation
- ii. Whole watermelon will be sliced to its appropriate bite size portion of approximately 20 grams in weight with its skin removed
- iii. These sliced pieces were prepared fresh when participants are recruited and kept in a plastic container during the tasting process.
- iv. The remaining uncut watermelon were wrapped with a plastic wrap and stored in the refrigerator (stored at 1-4 degrees Celsius), labelled with the date of preparation.
- v. The remaining watermelon are used within 24 hours. During each preparation for a new participant, the exposed portion of the cut watermelon will be re-cut and discarded (approximately 2 cm thickness) first prior to the preparation of the next tasting slices to ensure the freshness.
- vi. If not used within 24 hours, the cut watermelon will be discarded in the usual manner.
- vii. Uncut watermelons were kept in an allocated container in the pantry and were kept for not more than 3 days

#### Preparation and storage of apple

- i. Washed under clean running water prior to preparation
- ii. Each apple was sliced to its appropriate bite size portion of approximately 20 grams in weight with its skin removed.
- iii. These sliced pieces were prepared fresh when participants are recruited and kept in a plastic container during the tasting process.

- iv. The remaining sliced apple were wrapped with a plastic wrap and were used immediately or within 4 hours. If not used, they were discarded in the usual manner.
- v. Uncut apples were kept chilled in the refrigerator (stored at 1-4 degrees Celsius) for not more than 5 days.

### **Preparation and storage of bread**

- i. Bread loaf (plain white) were kept in an allocated container in the pantry.
- ii. The loaf was kept until the 'best before' date and was discarded when it had passed the date on its packaging label. The container storing the loaf will also be labelled with the best before date.
- iii. A slice of the loaf was prepared for each participant for food tasting and each slice was taken and prepared only when participants are recruited.
- iv. Preparation involved cutting of the crusted edges of a slice of bread from 1 cm within to a bite size portion of 5 x 5 cm and kept in a plastic container during the tasting process.

### **Preparation and storage of crackers**

- i. Jacobs cream crackers were used in this study (Manufacturer: Kraft®)
- ii. The crackers were kept in its original unopened packaging in an allocated container in the pantry.
- iii. The crackers were kept unopened in its packing until the 'best before' date and were discarded when it was due. The container will also be labelled with the best before date.
- iv. Preparation involved a piece of the cracker for each participant for food tasting in which a quarter of that piece (broken into four) were consumed by the participants. Preparation was done when participants are recruited.

Fruits prepared were stored in an allocated refrigerator in the staff rest room pantry of the gynaecology ward. This refrigerator was only used for food products and were kept clean to avoid contamination of the food items. The temperature for storing the food items in the refrigerator was in the range of 1 to 4 degrees Celsius. Bread and crackers were kept in an allocated area in the same pantry, in a container and inspected regularly to avoid any contamination of the food items.

The container used to store the food items was also inspected regularly for any damage and cleaned routinely by the investigator to avoid contamination of the food items. Each of the remaining cut fruits were labelled with the date of preparation and were used batch by batch and discarded if unused past its due date as per protocol. A knife and cutting board were provided for food preparation and were washed and cleaned for each preparation.