



Title	Characteristics and chromatographic separation of astaxanthin and its esters from the microalga haematococcus pluvialis
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Citation	Yuan, J. [袁建平]. (1999). Characteristics and chromatographic separation of astaxanthin and its esters from the microalga haematococcus pluvialis. (Thesis). University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong SAR. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.5353/th_b3123971
Issued Date	1999
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10722/35452
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**CHARACTERISTICS AND CHROMATOGRAPHIC
SEPARATION OF ASTAXANTHIN AND ITS ESTERS
FROM THE MICROALGA *Haematococcus pluvialis***

by

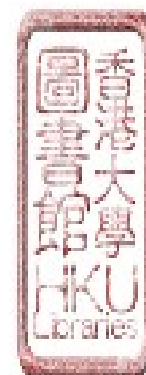
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B. Sc. (Dalian College of Light Industry, P. R. China)

M. Sc. (South China University of Technology, P. R. China)

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at The University of Hong Kong**

August 1999

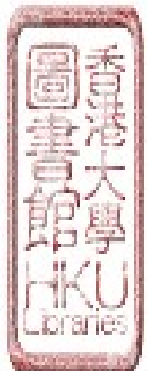


DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgment is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed J. P. Yuan

Jian-Ping Yuan



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Feng Chen for his moral encouragement, helpful guidance, thoughtful advice and intellectual stimulation. I have benefited a lot during my study under his supervision. I am also impressed by his efforts to supply me with necessary experimental instruments and conditions. I would like to thank him for the numerous revisions of my manuscripts and for the substantial investment in time spent on my behalf.

I wish to acknowledge that this research project was supported by the University of Hong Kong Committee on Research and Conference Grants and the Hong Kong Research Grants Council grants to Dr. Feng Chen, and that I was supported by a scholarship from the University of Hong Kong during my study.

I am grateful to Professor Si-Yuan Guo of South China University of Technology for his great help. I also acknowledge Professor Sammy Boussiba of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel for the supply of canthaxanthin standard and dry biomass samples of the alga *H. pluvialis*.

I wish to thank my colleagues in our laboratory, Miss Chui-Yee Yap, Prof. Lin Li, Prof. Jian-Jiang Zhong, Dr. Yi-Ming Zhang, Dr. Xian-Di Gong, Dr. Xian-Ming Shi, Dr. Xue-Wu Zhang, Dr. Xian-Zheng Li, Dr. Yue Jiang, Dr. Gui-Xing Ren, Dr. Rema Vazhappilly, Mr. Hui Chen, Miss Oi-Ha Lau, Miss Ping-Ping Lam, Miss Suk-Man Cheung, Mr. Zhi-You Wen, and Mr. Yin-Nin Ma for their helpful cooperation and discussion.

Finally, I have to express my thanks to my parents, my wife and my siblings for their understanding and support.



Abstract of thesis entitled

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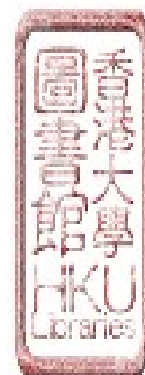
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Reversed-phase high performance liquid chromatographic methods were developed for the separation, identification, and determination of astaxanthin esters and the isomers of astaxanthin in the unsaponified and saponified pigment extracts from the microalga *Haematococcus pluvialis*. HPLC was conducted on a Waters liquid chromatograph equipped with two 510 pumps and a 996 photodiode array detector set at 250–700 nm. Beckman Ultrasphere C₁₈ column and Waters Symmetry C₁₈ column were used to separate carotenoids and chlorophylls in pigments extracts. The mobile phase consisted of methanol, dichloromethane, acetonitrile, and water.

The hydrolysis of astaxanthin esters and the degradation of astaxanthin during saponification of the pigment extract were investigated. Different concentrations of NaOH in methanol were used for the saponification under nitrogen in darkness. The concentration of NaOH was important for promoting the hydrolysis of astaxanthin esters and minimizing the degradation of astaxanthin during saponification. A high temperature should be avoided to minimize the degradation of astaxanthin.

The purification method including extraction, saponification, and separation was established for preparing purified *trans*-astaxanthin from a high-yielding



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