



## RESEARCH PAPER

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## Studying seed and oil physicochemical characteristics of four Iranian pomegranate (*Punica granatum* L.) varieties

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**Key words:** Pomegranate seed, oil characterization, fatty acid profile.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12692/ijb/4.8.78-86>

Article published on April 22, 2014

### Abstract

The study aimed to evaluate pomegranate seeds of four Iranian commercial varieties (Vahshe Kane Tehran, Shirin Shahvare Yazd, Pust Sefid and Gorche Shahvar Yazdi) in terms of some qualitative properties including protein, oil, dietary fiber, mineral contents and fatty acid composition. In addition, physicochemical properties of pomegranate seed oils (PSOs) were also studied. The results indicated that Pust Sefid had the maximum value of oil (16.9%) and crude fiber (42.4%), and nutrition (460.7Kcal/100g) among selected varieties. Pust Sefid had the highest level of phosphorus (2766.3 mg/kg) and magnesium (2052.0mg/kg), while the highest calcium (675.3mg/kg) and potassium (3724.6mg/kg) belonged to Gorche Shahvar Yazdi. The main fatty acid identified by gas chromatography was punicic acid ranged from 72.07% for Gorche Shahvar Yazdi to 73.31% for Shirin Shahvare Yazd ( $p < 0.05$ ). The ratio of saturated fatty acids of PSOs was obtained between 9.174 and 9.450, and this value for unsaturated fatty acids was ranging from 10.325 to 10.861 ( $p < 0.05$ ). PSOs obtained presented acid (3.78-8.36% punicic acid), peroxide (0.39-0.48meq O<sub>2</sub>/kg), iodine (216.9-220.3g I<sub>2</sub>/100g) and saponification (179.3-182.5mg KOH/g) values. Also, refractive index at 25°C, viscosity and density of PSOs varied from 1.461-1.527, 0.036-0.063Pa.s and 0.9202-0.9311g/cm<sup>3</sup>, respectively.

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## Introduction

The pomegranate (*Punica granatum* L.) belonging to the *Punicaceae* family, as one of the oldest edible fruits has been used extensively in the folk medicine of many cultures (Schubert *et al*, 1999). The pomogranate is a native fruit in Iran and has been grown widely in that country, India and the USA, and to a lesser level in most near and far eastern countries (Kyralan *et al*, 2009). Total global production of this crop is approximated at 1,500,000 tons and Iran with the highest area under cultivation produces 47% of world production (FAO, 2009). The fruit contains considerable amounts of seeds, ranging between 40 and 100 g kg<sup>-1</sup> of fruit weight depending on cultivar (Hernandez *et al*, 1998, Fadavi *et al*, 2006). These seeds remain as a waste product after processing, whereas they contained considerable amounts of lipid, protein, sugars and essential minerals (El-Nemr *et al*, 1990). El-Nemr *et al*, (1992) reported the amount of mineral elements except potassium in seed are higher than juice. The seeds of some pomegranate varieties are rich in lipids, which vary between 140-270 g/kg dry matter (Hernandez *et al*, 1998). There is an increasing interest in new sources of industrial oils, in the essential fatty acids of seed oils and in toxicity aspects of edible oils. Pomegranate seed oil (PSO) has several features that make it an attractive nutraceutical ingredient as a consequence of its novelty, good acceptance by the consumers, cheap availability and promising phytochemical composition (Fadavi *et al*, 2006). PSO contains 10-20% of total seed weight, with an ideal highly unsaturated fatty acid content, mainly constituted by the rare conjugate linolenic acid isomer punicic acid, which activities against metabolic syndrome and inflammation have been confirmed by various *in vivo* experiments (Melgarejo and Artes, 2000, Sassano *et al*, 2009). During the past years, many researchers just determined type and amount of the fatty acids and did no study on the physical and chemical characteristics of PSO. For example, El-shaarawy and Nahapetian (1983) showed that 8% of fatty acids of pomegranate seed oil were saturated, 10% monosaturated, 10% disaturated and approximately 70% conjugated acid, most probably punicic acid. El-

Nemr *et al*, (1990) showed that 83.6% of the fatty acid was saturated and 16.3% unsaturated. Melgarejo *et al*, (1995) with study on six cultivars of Spain pomegranate reported 30-33.8% of the fatty acids were saturated and 66.2-69.0% of the fatty acids were unsaturated. In another study, Kyralan *et al*, (2009) reported fatty acid composition of 15 commercial cultivars of pomegranate that are grown in Turkey. Physicochemical characteristics of seeds and oils obtained from different varieties of pomegranate fruits depends on cultivated status, growth, climate, maturity and storage conditions (Fadavi *et al*, 2006). Considering the effects of environmental conditions, cultivar and cultivation conditions on the physical and chemical properties, the need for further studies in this area is felt. To the best of our knowledge, detailed measurements of physicochemical properties of PSO have not been reported. Therefore, in this research, the seeds of four commercial varieties of Iranian pomegranate were compared by analyzing some chemical composition and oil physicochemical properties.

## Materials and methods

**Sample preparation:** Approximately 15 kg (n=40) of pomegranate fruits with medium size (350-400 g) from four cultivars [Vahshe Kane Tehran (VKT), Shirin Shahvare Yazd (SSY), Pust Sefid (PS) and Gorche Shahvar Yazdi (GSY)] in 2012 autumn Season were selected from mature fruits grown in the collection of the Agricultural Research Center of Yazd, Iran. Four fruits located externally and four located internally on each tree were harvested from five randomly selected trees for each pomegranate cultivar. Harvested pomegranate fruits were transported to the laboratory and they were sorted by appearance (i.e., free from sunburn, crack) then maturity seeds were separated from their juice sacs, washed with distilled water, and dried in a vacuum oven at 35°C until a constant weight was reached.

## Chemicals

The solvents and chemicals used in this study were of analytical grade and purchased from Merck Chemical Company (Darmstadt, Germany), Sigma-Aldrich

(Oakville, ON, Canada) and Fisher Scientific (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada).

**Seed chemical composition:** A dried sample was taken from each variety to be studied. They were later ground and 5g of powdered sample from each was weighted and fat was then extracted with petroleum ether using a Soxhlet apparatus according to the AACC method (AACC, 1987). The fat was recovered by petroleum ether distillation in a vapour rotor at 60°C. The samples were then dried in a desiccator for 1 hour, and finally weighed to obtain the grams of fat extracted. Result was expressed as the percentage of lipids in the dry matter of seed powder. The nitrogen content estimated by the Kjeldahl method and was converted to protein content by using the conversion factor 6.25. To remove carbon, about 2g (powdered) of each cultivar in a porcelain container was ignited and incinerated in the muffle furnace at about 550°C for 8 hours. The total ash was expressed as percent of dry weight. The minerals including iron (Fe), copper (Cu), manganese (Mn), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), and zinc (Zn) concentrations were determined as described by Agte *et al.*, (1995) with a minor modification. Absolutely 1g samples, in triplicate, were dry-ashed in a muffle furnace at 550 °C for 5 hours until a white residue of constant weight was obtained. The minerals were extracted from ash by adding 20.0 mL of 2.5% HCl, heated in a steam bath to reduce the volume to about 7.0 mL, and then was diluted to volume of 50 mL with deionised water, stored in clean polyethylene bottles and mineral contents determined using an atomic absorption spectrophotometer (Perkin-Elmer, Model 2380, USA). Sodium (Na) and potassium (K) contents were determined similar to the method of Chapman and Pratt (1961) using flame photometry instrument (JENWAY Limited, Dunmow Essex, UK). The used voltage and power were 230/115 V and 13 VA, respectively. Phosphorus content (P) was determined by the phosphomolybdate method (AOAC, 1990). Crude fiber was obtained by digesting 2 g of sample with H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and NaOH and incinerating the residue in a muffle furnace maintained at 550°C for 5 hours (AOAC, 1990). Carbohydrate content was estimated by

difference of mean values, from, 100-(Sum of percentages of moisture, ash, protein and lipids).

#### *Oil extraction*

The oil used for the determination of the fatty acid (FA) compositions and other oil indices were extracted according to the method reported by Kornsteiner *et al.*, (2006) with minor modifications. 5 gr powdered sample were placed in a conical glass containing around 50 mL of n-hexane and agitated on a magnetic stirrer for 3 hours. Then, the solution was filtered and the remaining solvent was evaporated by using a rotary evaporator at 40°C. Obtained oil was transferred into a small glass vial, flushed with nitrogen and maintained at -18°C until further analysis.

#### *Preparation of Fatty Acid Methyl Esters*

Fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) were prepared by transesterification according to the method 5509 of the ISO (1978), using KOH 2M in methanol and n-heptane medium.

#### *Fatty Acids Profile*

Fatty Acids compositions were determined using a gas chromatography (Agilent 6890, UK) equipped with a flame ionization detector (FID) and a BPX-70 capillary column (120 m, 250 µm i.d., 0.2 µm film thickness). The oven temperature was set at 198°C (Iso thermal) which was held for 6 minutes. Then, it was increased to 180 °C at 20 °C/ min, held for 10 minutes and increased again to 210 °C at 20 °C/min. Injector and detector temperatures were set at 250 and 280°C, respectively. Nitrogen was used as the carrier gas with inlet pressure of 33.3 psi. The FAME was identified by comparing their retention times with those of standard samples. The quantification of fatty acids was made according to their relative area percentages, comparing with their calibration curves.

#### *Oil Indices*

Iodine value (IV), acid value (AV), saponification value (SV), peroxide values (PV), refractive index (RI), viscosity (η), and density value of each samples were measured.

IV and SV were determined according to the standard methods from AOAC (1990). The AV was determined by method Cd 3d-63 of AOCS Official Methods of Analysis (AOCS, 1998). PV was determined spectrophotometrically based on a method from the International Dairy Federation (Shantha and Decker, 1994). Approximately, 0.25 g of extracted oil was weighed into a glass tube and dissolved in 9.7 mL of a mixture of chloroform:methanol (4:1, v/v). Then, a drop of ammonium thiocyanate solution (30%, w/v) and a drop of ferrous chloride solution (0.35%, w/v) were added to the tube. After standing for 5 minutes, the absorbance of the mixture was read at 500 nm using a spectrophotometer (Cesil, model CE 2502, UK). A calibration curve was also obtained using ferric chloride solutions containing 5-20 µg of Fe<sup>3+</sup>. The refractive index (RI) of oil samples was analyzed at room temperature according to the AOAC (1990) by Abbe refractometer (model G manufactured by Carl-Zeiss, Germany). The density of oil samples was determined with a specific gravity hydrometer (Proton, model 72082, Barcelona, Spain) at 20°C.

#### Statistical Analysis

All experiments were performed in triplicate. Comparison among the means was carried out using least significant differences (LSD) at the 95% confidence level using Statistical Analysis System (SAS) release 9.1 (SAS Institute, Inc., Cary, NC, USA).

#### Results and discussion

**Chemical composition:** Chemical composition and mineral concentration of the pomegranate seeds obtained from four studied varieties were given in Table 1. As considered in this Table, significant differences were observed among the seeds in their content of oil, crude protein, crude fiber, carbohydrate and ash ( $p < 0.05$ ). Crude fiber was the highest constitute in all samples, ranging from 36.5 % in GSY to 42.4 % in PS, whereas ash presented the lowest values; it was higher in GSY (1.887 %) and lower in SSY (1.592 %). The obtained results of crude fiber and ash contents has somewhat coordination with the findings of El-Nemr *et al*, (1990) (35.5 and 2% respectively).

**Table 1.** Proximate composition and mineral content of seeds obtained from four iranian commercial pomegranate varieties.

Component (%)	Varieties			
	VKT	SSY	PS	GSY
Oil	14.6 ± 0.08 <sup>c</sup>	15.6 ± 0.09 <sup>b</sup>	16.9 ± 0.11 <sup>a</sup>	13.5 ± 0.08 <sup>d</sup>
Crude protein	8.5 ± 0.029 <sup>d</sup>	11.3 ± 0.064 <sup>a</sup>	10.7 ± 0.052 <sup>b</sup>	10.5 ± 0.034 <sup>c</sup>
Crude fiber	38.9 ± 2.24 <sup>ab</sup>	40.1 ± 3.22 <sup>ab</sup>	42.4 ± 2.80 <sup>a</sup>	36.5 ± 1.99 <sup>b</sup>
Carbohydrate	32.19 ± 1.76 <sup>a</sup>	26.63 ± 1.44 <sup>b</sup>	24.09 ± 1.26 <sup>b</sup>	33.41 ± 2.02 <sup>a</sup>
Ash	1.653 ± 0.004 <sup>c</sup>	1.592 ± 0.006 <sup>d</sup>	1.675 ± 0.006 <sup>b</sup>	1.887 ± 0.007 <sup>a</sup>
Mineral (mg/kg)				
Ca	378.00 ± 10.82 <sup>c</sup>	674.00 ± 7.00 <sup>a</sup>	628.00 ± 5.20 <sup>b</sup>	675.33 ± 8.51 <sup>a</sup>
Cu	5.49 ± 0.86 <sup>b</sup>	6.99 ± 1.12 <sup>b</sup>	9.81 ± 1.00 <sup>a</sup>	6.45 ± 0.95 <sup>b</sup>
Fe	31.227 ± 1.54 <sup>a</sup>	29.017 ± 1.41 <sup>ab</sup>	16.280 ± 1.11 <sup>c</sup>	28.150 ± 1.78 <sup>b</sup>
K	3070.00 ± 6.56 <sup>b</sup>	2677.33 ± 7.51 <sup>c</sup>	2024.67 ± 9.50 <sup>d</sup>	3724.67 ± 10.07 <sup>a</sup>
Mg	1327.67 ± 15.63 <sup>c</sup>	1824.00 ± 22.00 <sup>b</sup>	2052.00 ± 25.00 <sup>a</sup>	1819.67 ± 20.84 <sup>b</sup>
Mn	8.600 ± 1.69 <sup>b</sup>	9.497 ± 1.64 <sup>b</sup>	12.437 ± 1.35 <sup>a</sup>	7.540 ± 1.39 <sup>b</sup>
Na	211.33 ± 3.51 <sup>a</sup>	144.00 ± 2.00 <sup>b</sup>	84.50 ± 0.56 <sup>d</sup>	127.33 ± 3.06 <sup>c</sup>
P	2283.67 ± 19.30 <sup>c</sup>	2416.67 ± 17.01 <sup>b</sup>	2766.33 ± 22.72 <sup>a</sup>	2194.00 ± 18.73 <sup>d</sup>
Zn	29.173 ± 1.44 <sup>c</sup>	31.273 ± 1.66 <sup>bc</sup>	70.957 ± 2.30 <sup>a</sup>	34.540 ± 1.82 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a,b,c</sup> letters indicate the statistical difference in rows.

The lipid content of the analyzed samples ranged from 13.5 % for GSY to 16.9 % for PS. Kyralan *et al*, (2009) reported the oil content of 15 commercial pomegranate seed varieties in the range of 13.95-

24.13%, that was partially consistent with the results obtained in this study. However, the amounts of lipid in this study were in contrast with those of El-Shaarawy and Nahapetian (1983) and Fadavi *et al*,

(2005). These differences could be attributed to the variety, harvesting year, environmental condition and latitude, with different temperatures, rainfall and light, which can influence the chemical composition of fruits (Parcerisa *et al*, 1995). The crude protein values were 8.5, 10.5, 10.7 and 11.3%, for VKT, GSY,

PS and SSY, respectively. These results were less than those reported by El-Nemr *et al*, (1990) (13.2%). The Carbohydrate content of samples ranged from 24.09 % to 33.41 %, following the order GSY> VKT> SSY> PS.

**Table 2.** Fatty acids composition of seed oil obtained from four Iranian commercial pomegranate varieties (% w/w).

Fatty acids	Varieties			
	VKT	SSY	PS	GSY
Lauric C <sub>12:0</sub>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>
Myristic C <sub>14:0</sub>	0.03 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.03 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.03 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.04 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>
Palmitic C <sub>16:0</sub>	4.35 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	4.46 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>	4.04 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>	4.41 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>
Palmitoleic C <sub>16:1</sub>	0.06 ± 0.00 <sup>d</sup>	0.07 ± 0.00 <sup>c</sup>	0.09 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.08 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>
Margaric C <sub>17:0</sub>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>
Margaroleic C <sub>17:1</sub>	0.02 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.01 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.02 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>
Stearic C <sub>18:0</sub>	2.99 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>	2.88 ± 0.2 <sup>a</sup>	3.00 ± 0.4 <sup>a</sup>	2.81 ± 0.1 <sup>a</sup>
Oleic C <sub>18:1c</sub>	9.06 ± 0.3 <sup>b</sup>	8.31 ± 0.3 <sup>c</sup>	9.77 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>	9.36 ± 0.3 <sup>ab</sup>
Elaidic C <sub>18:1t</sub>	0.07 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.06 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.06 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.07 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>
Linoleic C <sub>18:2c</sub>	8.11 ± 0.5 <sup>b</sup>	8.53 ± 0.4 <sup>ab</sup>	8.13 ± 0.1 <sup>b</sup>	9.03 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>
Linoelaidic C <sub>18:2t</sub>	0.33 ± 0.02 <sup>ab</sup>	0.35 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	0.30 ± 0.01 <sup>b</sup>	0.31 ± 0.01 <sup>b</sup>
α-Linolenic C <sub>18:3</sub>	0.04 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.04 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.04 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.1 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>
Punicic C <sub>18:3</sub>	73.15 ± 0.4 <sup>a</sup>	73.31 ± 0.5 <sup>a</sup>	72.71 ± 0.4 <sup>ab</sup>	72.07 ± 0.3 <sup>b</sup>
Arachidic C <sub>20:0</sub>	0.62 ± 0.08 <sup>a</sup>	0.60 ± 0.03 <sup>a</sup>	0.64 ± 0.07 <sup>a</sup>	0.62 ± 0.06 <sup>a</sup>
Eicosenoic C <sub>20:1</sub>	0.98 ± 0.01 <sup>b</sup>	1.08 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	0.98 ± 0.01 <sup>b</sup>	0.90 ± 0.01 <sup>c</sup>
SFA**	8.01 ± 0.18 <sup>a</sup>	7.99 ± 0.07 <sup>a</sup>	7.73 ± 0.37 <sup>a</sup>	7.90 ± 0.16 <sup>a</sup>
USFA**	91.82 ± 1.19 <sup>a</sup>	91.76 ± 0.24 <sup>a</sup>	92.09 ± 0.8 <sup>a</sup>	91.94 ± 0.3 <sup>a</sup>
MUFA/PUFA**	0.123 ± 0.00 <sup>ab</sup>	0.117 ± 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	0.133 ± 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.127 ± 0.00 <sup>ab</sup>

\*\* SFA saturated fatty acid, USFA unsaturated fatty acid, MUFA monounsaturated fatty acid, PUFA polyunsaturated fatty acid, <sup>a,b,c</sup> letters indicate the statistical difference in rows.

There were also differences in mineral contents of the pomegranate seed four investigated varieties ( $p < 0.05$ ). Potassium was conspicuously the highest followed by phosphorus, magnesium, calcium and sodium. The potassium content of GSY (3724.67 mg/Kg) was higher than those for VKT (3070.00 mg/Kg), SSY (2677.33 mg/Kg) and PS (2024.67 mg/Kg). In the present work, we found that the presence of potassium in GSY could be responsible of the high ash content. In fact, a positive significant correlation ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the ash content and potassium or phosphorus content was established. Potassium is the most important intracellular element; it is required for various physiological functions (Olaniyi *et al*, 1993). Beside the major mineral metals cited above, substantial amount of some microelements such as Zn, Fe, Mn and Cu were

found. Concentrations of these microelements and the ranges of variations for these minerals were 29.173-70.957, 16.280-31.227, 7.540-12.437, and 5.49- 6.9 mg/Kg, respectively. In general, most of the minerals of the VKT were slightly less than of the other varieties. Chemical composition of pomegranate seeds revealed that this by-product could be valuable. In order to justify the extraction of PSO, it is necessary to study its functional properties.

#### Fatty Acid Composition

The fatty acid composition of the seed oils of the pomegranate varieties studied consisted of fifteen fatty acids (Table 2). There were small variations in the contents of fatty acids among the oils studied, leading to likeness in total saturated (SFA), unsaturated (USFA), monounsaturated (MUFA) and

polyunsaturated (PUFAs) fatty acids. The main SFA among the four varieties studied here was palmitic acid ranging from 4.04% (in PS) to 4.46% (in SSY). Stearic and arachidic acids, other SFAs that were found in the oils, were within 2.81-3.00 and 0.60-0.64 %, respectively. Other saturated fatty acids such as lauric, myristic and margaric acids identified in level of insignificant and their ranges were 0.01% for lauric, 0.03-0.04% for myristic and 0.01% for margaric. Results of this study on the SFAs levels in the PSO were in good agreement with those reported by Melgarejo and Artes (2000). But our results do not correspond with the studies of Kyralan *et al*, (2009). All varieties had high amount of total unsaturated fatty acids. Major mono-unsaturated fatty acid (MUFA) among all studied varieties was oleic acid, ranging from 8.31% (for SSY) to 9.77% (for PS). Also, oleic acid contents in VKT and GSY were 9.06 and

9.36%, respectively. Eicosenoic acid (C20:1) as a MUFA was identified in PSOs and its ranges were 0.90 to 1.08%. SSY was allocated highest value (1.08%) and follow that were VKT (0.98%), PS (0.98%) and GSY (0.9%). Besides MUFAs mentioned above, a number of other MUFAs, such as palmitoleic (C16:1) (0.06-0.09%), margaroleic (C17:1) (0.01-0.02%) and elaidic (C18:1t) (0.06-0.07%) were also identified that their amounts was not significant. These results of MUFAs did not consistent with a number of previous studies, which can relate to variety, maturity level, soil composition and latitude (Parcerisa *et al*, 1995). Melgarejo and Artes (2000) reported 3.81-20.25% and 0.92-2.88% for oleic and palmitoleic acids, respectively. Reported values by Sassano *et al*, (2009) for oleic (6.82- 7.17%) and eicosenoic (0.64 - 0.66%) acids were less than amounts that obtained in this study.

**Table 3.** Some physicochemical characteristics of pomegranate seed oils obtained from four studied varieties

Sample	IV	AV	PV	SV	RI	( $n_D^{20}$ )	$\eta$
VKT	220.34 ± 4.9 <sup>a</sup>	8.36 ± 0.06 <sup>a</sup>	0.48 ± 0.11 <sup>a</sup>	181.1 ± 0.08 <sup>a</sup>	1.500 ± 0.028 <sup>a</sup>	0.9245 ± 0.0015 <sup>bc</sup>	0.054 ± 0.003 <sup>ab</sup>
SSY	219.89 ± 6.4 <sup>a</sup>	3.78 ± 0.11 <sup>d</sup>	0.44 ± 0.05 <sup>a</sup>	182.5 ± 0.32 <sup>a</sup>	1.461 ± 0.048 <sup>a</sup>	0.9311 ± 0.0009 <sup>a</sup>	0.036 ± 0.002 <sup>b</sup>
PS	217.25 ± 4.2 <sup>a</sup>	5.25 ± 0.07 <sup>c</sup>	0.50 ± 0.11 <sup>a</sup>	179.3 ± 0.26 <sup>a</sup>	1.527 ± 0.016 <sup>a</sup>	0.9202 ± 0.0031 <sup>c</sup>	0.063 ± 0.004 <sup>a</sup>
GSY	216.95 ± 8.5 <sup>a</sup>	5.84 ± 0.08 <sup>b</sup>	0.39 ± 0.07 <sup>a</sup>	182.0 ± 0.12 <sup>a</sup>	1.495 ± 0.035 <sup>a</sup>	0.9288 ± 0.0021 <sup>b</sup>	0.054 ± 0.001 <sup>ab</sup>

a,b,c,d letters indicate the statistical difference in columns.

Table 2. Fatty acids composition of seed oil obtained from four Iranian commercial pomegranate varieties (% w/w).

According to Table 2, PSOs were rich in punicic acid (C18:3) as a PUFA. Punicic acid was the highest level among all fatty acids and found at 73.31% for SSY, 73.15% for VKT, 72.71% for PS and 72.07% for GSY. Similarly, Kyralan *et al*, (2009) reported high levels of punicic acid (70.42 - 76.17%) in some Turkish varieties, while Melgarejo and Artes (2000) and Fadavi *et al*, (2006) found higher and lower levels of punicic acid than amounts detected in this study, respectively. The levels of linoleic (C18:2c) and linoelaidic (C18:2t) acids ranged from 8.11% for VKT to 9.03% for GSY, and 0.30% for PS to 0.35% for

SSY, respectively.  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid (C18:3) were also present but in much lesser amounts. The highest amount of  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid was in GSY (0.1%), whereas its content in other varieties was 0.04%. The USFA amount in the oil extracted from PS seeds was about 92.09%, which was greater than that of the SSY oil at a level of 91.76 % and the VKT oil of 91.82 % and the GSY oil of 91.94%. Moreover, the ratio of MUFA to PUFA is an important parameter for oil stability in highly unsaturated oils (Kodad and Socias, 2008). Concerning the ratio of MUFA to PUFA, this is similar in the four varieties studied, varying between 0.117 (SSY) and 0.133 (PS). The corresponding values for this ratio were 0.123 and 0.127 for VKT and GSY, respectively. This ratio indicates that these varieties have a high content of PUFA, which may make them

more attractive for the consumer who wishes to use this type of acids.

#### *Physicochemical properties of oils*

The physical and chemical properties of the oils extracted by cold press method were compared and the results are presented in Table 3. The states of oils were liquid at room temperature and colors of oils were golden. The RI for oil of all of studied varieties at 25°C were close: 1.461 for SSY, 1.495 for GSY, 1.500 for VKT and 1.527 for PS. These results were in good agreement with previous study (1.518) that performed by El-Nemr *et al.*, (1990). El-shaarawy and Nahapetian (1983) reported 1.477-1.518 for IR in PSO, that was consistent with the results of this study.

Iodine value (g I<sub>2</sub>/100g oil); acid value (% oleic acid); peroxide value (meq O<sub>2</sub>/kg oil); saponification value (mg KOH/g); ortho-diphenols content (mM ortho-diphenols/kg oil); refractive index (at 25°C); ( $n_D^{20}$ ) density at 20°C (g/cm<sup>3</sup>); viscosity (Pa.s).

The results indicated that GSY had the highest level of oil viscosity (0.063 Pa.s), while the lowest viscosity of the pomegranate oil was related to SSY (0.036 Pa.s) (Table 3). The oils density significantly varied from 0.9202 to 0.9311 g/cm<sup>3</sup> among different varieties ( $p < 0.05$ ). The measured chemical properties of oils were IV, AV, SV and PV demonstrates the levels of unsaturation and potential oxidative sensitivities of the oils (Moodley *et al.*, 2007). The IV of the analyzed samples ranged from 216.95 for GSY to 220.34 for VKT. Also, this factor for PS and SSY were 217.25 and 219.89, respectively. These high values of IV are due to the high level of punicic acid (72.07-73.31%) in PSOs. Therefore, PSO is susceptible to oxidative degradation. The AV of the samples ranged from 3.78 (SSY) to 8.36 (VKT). AV of VKT was significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than that of the other seeds. This parameter for oil of GSY, PS and SSY varieties were 5.84, 5.25 and 3.78, respectively. The values obtained for the IV and AV had significant differences with the results of El-shaarawy and Nahapetian (1983) and El-Nemr *et al.*, (1990). The high SV showed that the oils have smaller molecular weight than other edible oils.

This property of the oil depends on the presence of higher fatty acids and its unsaturation level. No significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) difference was observed for the values of SV (179.3-182.5mg KOH/g) among the PSOs. The PV of oil is a valuable index to determine oil quality. If the PV becomes higher than 9 meq/1000g oil, it indicates oxidative corruption in oil (Ozcan, 2009). As can be seen in Table 3, the amount of PV for studied varieties is in the range of 0.39 for GSY to 0.50 for PS, which represents good extraction and maintenance condition. No significant difference was obtained in the PV of oils from samples at the 95% confidence level. The PV depends on a number of factors such as the state of oxidation (quantity of oxygen consumed), the method of extraction used and the type of fatty acids present in the oil. We did not find any report for PV of PSO among previous papers for comparison.

#### **Conclusion**

The observations made in this study reveal that the pomegranate seeds are rich in crude protein, crude lipids, dietary fiber and minerals such as K, P, Mg and Ca. The utilization of pomegranate seeds for oil and protein production could alleviate food shortages and provide extra income to the rural farmers where the plant grows. The results of this study also showed that the PSOs obtained from four Iranian varieties were quite similar in their physicochemical characteristics, with only a few significant variations. Noting the increasingly popularity of PSOs as a source on PUFAs, this investigation supports a view of the characteristic and quality of PSOs in Iran and could also serve as a starting point for developing quality standards since there are no specifications available for PSO.

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