

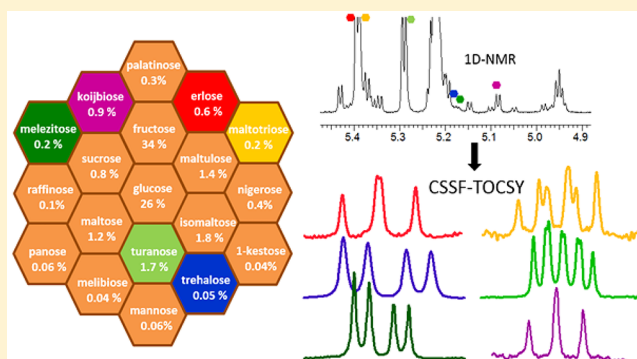
1 NMR Quantification of Carbohydrates in Complex Mixtures. 2 A Challenge on Honey

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5 **S** Supporting Information

6 **ABSTRACT:** The knowledge of carbohydrate composition is
7 greatly important to determine the properties of natural
8 matrices such as foodstuff and food ingredients. However,
9 because of the structural similarity and the multiple isomeric
10 forms of carbohydrates in solution, their analysis is often a
11 complex task. Here we propose an NMR analytical procedure
12 based on highly selective chemical shift filters followed by
13 TOCSY, which allows us to acquire specific background-free
14 signals for each sugar. The method was tested on raw honey
15 samples dissolved in water with no other pretreatment.
16 In total, 22 sugars typically found in honey were quantified:
17 4 monosaccharides (glucose, fructose, mannose, rhamnose),
18 11 disaccharides (sucrose, trehalose, turanose, maltose, mal-
19 tulose, palatinose, melibiose and melezitose, isomaltose, gentiobiose nigerose, and kojibiose), and 7 trisaccharides (raffinose,
20 isomaltotriose, erlose, melezitose, maltotriose, panose, and 1-kestose). Satisfactory results in terms of limit of quantification
21 (0.03–0.4 g/100g honey), precision (% RSD: 0.99–4.03), trueness (bias % 0.4–4.2), and recovery (97–104%) were obtained.
22 An accurate control of the instrumental temperature and of the sample pH endows an optimal chemical shift reproducibility,
23 making the procedure amenable to automation and suitable to routine analysis. While validated on honey, which is one of the
24 most complex natural matrices in terms of saccharides composition, this innovative approach can be easily transferred to other
25 natural matrices.



26 **S**imple carbohydrates are among the most important com-
27 ponents of foodstuff and food ingredients, wherein specific
28 mono-, di-, and oligo-saccharides can be naturally present or
29 added to the final product for technological, nutritional, or
30 hedonistic purposes. Indeed, in the human diet, carbohydrates
31 are a major source of calories, as well as the cause of some
32 potentially serious diseases. To ensure important characteristics
33 such as quality, authenticity, and flavor, detailed information
34 regarding the sugar composition in specific foodstuff are man-
35 datory. Not surprisingly, there is a growing interest in the devel-
36 opment of analytical methods for the accurate quantification of
37 simple carbohydrates.^{1–4}

38 The currently accepted methods for quantification of sugars
39 and oligosaccharides are mainly based on separation techniques
40 (possibly preceded by derivatization⁵) with different detection
41 schemes. Due to its stable performance in quantitative analysis,
42 high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) is certainly
43 the most popular analytical method for this purpose.^{6–10}

44 An improvement over HPLC is represented by high-perfor-
45 mance anion exchange chromatography (HPAEC) with pulsed
46 amperometric detector (PAD).¹¹ Albeit providing a fast analysis
47 of several sugars, this technique is affected by interfering sub-
48 stances such as lipids and proteins, which must be pre-emptively
49 removed.¹²

50 Carbohydrates can also be determined and quantified using
51 GC, provided they are derivatized either as alditol acetates or

as trimethylsilyl derivatives. In both cases, two reactions are
needed.^{13–15}

52
53
54 Recently, GC-MS¹⁶ and LC-ESI-MS/MS methods have been
55 reported in the separation and quantification of sugars; the
56 performances of these two techniques were compared to HPLC
57 with evaporative light scattering detection (HPLC-ELSD) in the
58 analysis of small-molecule carbohydrates in jujube extracts.¹³
59 While achieving a better sensitivity, it was found that MS can
60 reliably detect most analytes but with lower recoveries than
61 those of HPLC-ELSD.

62 FT-IR has been also successfully employed to analyze glucose,
63 fructose, and sucrose content composition in fruit juices and honey.
64 In this case, an ATR accessory is commonly employed, and calibra-
65 tion sets containing mixtures of the sugars are necessary to develop
66 a partial least-squares regression model to fit the data.^{17,18}

67 Finally, among other separation techniques that can provide
68 high resolution, capillary electrophoresis (CE), has been occasion-
69 ally selected for the determination of sugars in food products.^{19,20}

70 In general, however, most of the aforementioned method-
71 ologies are either restricted to few sugars, or they do not always
72 deliver a satisfactory resolution.

Received: September 6, 2017

Accepted: November 6, 2017

73 Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) is a powerful tool in
74 the analysis of a large number of constituents in complex mix-
75 tures,²¹ and in the past few years, the use of quantitative NMR
76 (qNMR) as a tool in food analysis has increased considerably
77 because of the availability of high-field NMR systems.^{22–25}
78 qNMR is nondestructive, highly reproducible, precise, and
79 accurate. Moreover, it can simultaneously quantify several com-
80 pounds without the need for chromatographic separation, it
81 requires minimal sample treatment and no derivatization steps.
82 These features have fueled an increasing use of qNMR as an
83 alternative to LC-based quantitation, which is reflected by the
84 rise of new literature on qNMR applications.^{24,26,27}

85 Not surprisingly, research in this field has taken many routes:
86 improvements in the spectral resolution are pursued by switch-
87 ing from 1D to 2D techniques (mostly HSQC²⁸), while the
88 intrinsic low sensitivity of NMR is tackled by use of high fields,
89 cryogenic probes, and, more recently, even by hyper-polariza-
90 tion or dynamic-nuclear polarization techniques.²⁹

91 Despite its potential, NMR spectroscopy is seldom used for
92 the profiling of carbohydrates. The principal reasons for this
93 are (1) the severe resonances overlap due to the modest
94 variance of ¹H chemical shifts in sugars; (2) the low sensitivity
95 for low-concentration sugars; and (3) the conformational equi-
96 libria of different anomeric forms for reducing sugars.^{25,30}
97 Nonetheless, qNMR methods based on deconvolution of
98 standard ¹H NMR^{31–33} or multidimensional NMR³⁴ are being
99 very strongly supported for routine analysis of fruit juice,
100 wine,³⁵ and, more recently, also for honey. Although useful for
101 fast screening, these methods generally lack accuracy, are
102 restricted to few sugars, and the limits of quantification are still
103 too high.

104 In this challenging context, we propose an NMR method
105 based on chemical shift-selective filtration to enhance the selec-
106 tivity on specific target resonances.³⁶ When complemented
107 with TOCSY, this method allows to isolate a specific spin sys-
108 tem for each analyzed carbohydrate, despite the similar struc-
109 ture of these molecules. An analytical procedure has been
110 developed and tested on honey samples, without any pretreat-
111 ment and derivatization other than dissolution in D₂O. Even-
112 tually, up to 22 oligosaccharides were identified and quantified
113 in genuine honey from several different botanical origins
114 (4 acacia, 3 chestnut, 3 linden, 3 orange, 3 honeydew, 3 cherry,
115 3 coriander). To the best of our knowledge, this represents one
116 of the largest number of quantified carbohydrates in the
117 currently available literature.

118 ■ METHODOLOGY

119 **NMR.** In the analysis of complex mixtures, 1D TOCSY
120 experiments featuring the selective excitation of ¹H resonances
121 represent a straightforward approach to correlate the signals of
122 each chemical species.³⁷ However, in the case of honey, the
123 occurrence of overlapping multiplets in the anomeric spectral
124 region often requires a selectivity beyond the reach of standard
125 shaped (RF-modulated) pulses. Chemical shift-selective filters
126 (CSSFs) provide an effective solution to this problem. At differ-
127 ence with shaped pulses, the excitation profile of CSSFs results
128 from the constructive addition of on-resonance signals, while
129 off-resonance magnetization components are eliminated by
130 destructive interference.^{36,38} In year 2004, Robinson et al.³⁹ have
131 substantially improved the performances of CSSFs by com-
132 plementing the original idea of Hall and Norwood with
133 pulsed field gradients (PFGs). Further refinements of the
134 gradient-enhanced CSSF have been subsequently proposed by

Duncan et al.,⁴⁰ and more recently, a CSSF-TOCSY-INEPT¹³⁵
experiment has been developed for the 1D ¹³C spectroscopic¹³⁶
analysis of isomeric mixtures.⁴¹¹³⁷

138 Considering two uncoupled spins I_1 and I_2 separated by a
139 chemical shift difference of ν Hz, the analysis of the pulse
140 sequence proposed by Robinson highlights the following
141 results. When the signal from spin 1 is set on resonance and
142 both spins resonate inside the refocusing band of the soft pulse,
143 the relevant contributions that emerge from the filter are

$$I_{1x} + I_{2x} \cos(2\pi\nu t) \quad (1) \quad 144$$

145 where I_{ix} represents the in-phase magnetization of spin i , and
146 the frame of reference has been chosen as rotating at the
147 Larmor frequency of spin 1 (namely, $\omega_1 = 2\pi\nu_1$). All the signal
148 from spins resonating outside the refocusing band of the soft
149 pulse are suppressed by the PFGs, and possible scalar couplings
150 to spins 1 and 2 do not alter the outcome of eq 1. The param-
151 eter t represents the duration of the filter, which varies between
152 the values $t = 0$ and $t = t_{\max}$ to yield the following expression for
153 the averaged signal:

$$S(\nu) = \frac{1}{t_{\max}} \int_{t=0}^{t=t_{\max}} I_{2x} \cos(2\pi\nu t) e^{-t/T_2} dt \quad (2) \quad 154$$

155 It is useful to point out that, in the absence of relaxation, eq 2
156 becomes a sinc($2\pi\nu t_{\max}$) function. In the experimental practice,
157 the filter duration time is discretized into a series of N time
158 intervals so that $t_{\max} = N \Delta$ and FIDs collected for each N value
159 are finally coadded. Importantly, smaller chemical shift differ-
160 ences require longer evolution times to provide a good filtration
161 (Figure S-2).

162 Since only in-phase magnetization emerges from the filter,
163 a CSSF can be conveniently followed by a mixing scheme,
164 leading to highly selective 1D-analogues of 2D experiments like
165 NOESY or TOCSY. In the latter case, the cluster of RF pulses
166 that drives the isotropic mixing also introduces a slight heating
167 of the sample, which may ultimately displace the resonances by
168 a few Hz. Due to the high selectivity of the CSSF, such a slight
169 offset can be detrimental for the experimental output and must
170 be carefully accounted for.

171 The ¹H NMR spectrum of an oligosaccharide can be described
172 in terms of a series of isolated spin systems—one per monomeric
173 unit—separated by the glycosidic bonds. In the case of honey
174 samples, such monosaccharide units are generally limited to
175 glucose, fructose, and galactose. Since the same monomeric
176 unit can be found in several oligosaccharides with similar
177 sequences, the extent of NMR signal overlap is usually very
178 high for sugar mixtures. In practice, when using a simple pulse-
179 acquire experiment on a honey sample, only a few sugars can be
180 determined quantitatively.^{31,32} The approach proposed here is
181 based on a highly selective resonance excitation (down to a few
182 Hz) combined with a TOCSY mixing scheme of proper length.
183 For a complex matrix such as honey, this experiment provides
184 a formidable spectral simplification, yielding the subspectra of
185 only a few monosaccharide units, depending on the number of
186 resonances excited by the CSSF pulse scheme.

187 Application of this technique to the analysis of such a com-
188 plex mixture requires a careful optimization of the experimental
189 conditions, particularly of the excitation frequency and the
190 selectivity of the CSSF. As the proton resonance frequencies
191 prove to be highly reproducible (within ppb),³⁰ an optimization
192 of the experimental parameters was carried out on standard
193 solutions of the 22 sugars under investigation.

In principle, longer CSSFs perform better in the isolation of signals specific for each sugar. Note however that a possible disadvantage in the use of long duration filters is the partial signal loss from transverse relaxation (about 10% for a 250 ms filter applied to a signal with $T_2 = 1$ s, see Figure S-3); in addition, the resulting narrow selection band leads to possible offset errors with significant signal loss. For such reasons, filters of shorter duration are always preferable, even in cases where the CSSF excitation profile is semiselective. In this case, indeed, the TOCSY subspectrum must exhibit some well-isolated signals stemming only from the species of interest.

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Chemicals. The following sugars were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich: D-Glucose (Glt) $\geq 99.5\%$, D(+)-Mannose (Man), D(-)-Fructose (Fru) $\geq 99\%$, D(+)-Turannose (Trn) $\geq 98\%$, Erllose (Erl) $\geq 94\%$, Isomaltotriose (Imt), D(+)-Melibiose (Mlb) $\geq 99.0\%$, D(+), Raffinose pentahydrated (Raf) $\geq 98.0\%$, Palatinose hydrate (Plt) $\geq 99\%$, L-Rhamnose monohydrate (Rha) min 99%, Sucrose (Scr) $\geq 99.5\%$, D(+)-Maltose (Mlt) monohydrate min 98%, Melezitose (Mlz) $\geq 99.0\%$, Trealose dihydrate (Trl) (Certified Reference Materials), Maltulose (Mtl) $\geq 98.0\%$, Nigerose (Ngr) $\geq 94.0\%$, D-Panose (Pns) $\geq 97\%$, Maltotriose (Ml3), Isomaltose (Imt) 98%, Gentiobiose (Gnt) $\geq 85\%$, 1-Kestose (Kst) $\geq 98.0\%$, Kojibiose (kjb).

The buffer solution was prepared by dissolving 2.55g KH_2PO_4 and 2.45 mg NaN_3 in 50 mL D_2O ($d = 99.97\%$) and then adjusting the pD to 4.4 with H_3PO_4 .

Spectral Acquisition and Signal Processing. All NMR experiments were performed on a Bruker Avance III spectrometer operating at 500.13 MHz ^1H Larmor frequency and equipped with a 5 mm z-gradient broadband inverse (BBI) probe. All NMR samples were thermally equilibrated at 298.1 K for at least 5 min inside the spectrometer. The following acquisition parameters were used for the CSSF-TOCSY experiments (see Figure S-1): 8 scans for minor sugars (2 scans for glucose and fructose) $\times 14$ increments; 6000 Hz spectral width on 8k points (0.7 Hz FID resolution); 1.3 s acquisition time; 2 s relaxation delay; 70 ms DIPSI-2 mixing scheme flanked by zero-quantum filters⁴² (see page S4 in the Supporting Information). With these parameters, the overall duration of the CSSF-TOCSY experiment was about 7 min for each minor sugar (2 min for glucose and fructose).

All the spectra were processed using a macro programmed in ACDLab v.12.5 (zero filling to 32 k, exponential multiplication with a line broadening of 0.3 Hz). Phase and baseline correction were performed in an automated way.

Automation. An accurate control of pH and temperature endows a high reproducibility (down to parts per billion) of the proton chemical shifts among different samples. Slight alterations can be easily detected (possibly by a software routine) and adjusted, for example, by referencing the H2 resonance of β -D-glucose to one fixed value (3.213 ppm in our case).

^1H chemical shifts of carbohydrates are largely insensitive to variations of pH or ionic strength³⁰ due to the absence of ionizable groups: indeed we have verified that all the sugars signals exhibit constant shifts with respect to the reference.

On this basis, it is possible to keep the acquisition parameters constant for each sample, build a list of excitation frequencies for the CSSF, and automate the acquisition of the spectra (in our case with Icon NMR software and Bruker Sample Jet hardware). The selected signals for each analyte were automatically integrated by using the same frequency interval centered on the

selected resonances, and the absolute integrated signal intensities were produced as output.

Standard Sugars in Buffer Solution. For each reference sample, both a conventional 1D spectrum and CSSF-TOCSY were acquired. The CSSF-TOCSY spectra were obtained by selectively exciting anomeric protons or other isolated protons. The resonance assignment was confirmed by literature data.^{30,43}

Honey Samples. Each genuine honey sample was pretreated in a microwave oven for a few seconds until all crystals were dissolved. NMR samples were prepared by dissolving ~ 240 mg of honey in the buffer solution and adjusting the ratio honey (mg)/buffer (ml) to exactly 240 mg/mL. The pD was carefully adjusted to 4.40.

Synthetic Honey Solutions. Synthetic solutions containing selected sugars among those mostly represented in honey were prepared to build the calibration curves. The range of sugars concentration was matched with the values reported in the literature for honey,⁴⁴ to reproduce the natural matrices as closely as possible. The synthetic solutions contained a constant amount of glucose (74.00 mg/mL) and fructose (98.28 mg/mL) and variable concentrations of minor sugars, which were chosen in such a way as to provide the same total amounts of sugars. The pD was adjusted to 4.40. Eight concentration intervals were considered in the range of 0.80–12.7 mg/mL. One calibration curve, for each sugar, was constructed by linear regression of the integrated signal intensities of the selected peaks against the concentrations.

In the case of glucose and fructose, the calibration curves were built by using solutions wherein the concentration of only one of the two sugars was incremented, keeping the same total concentration to about 172 mg/mL.

The calibration curves were employed to estimate the concentration of the sugars via the absolute integrated intensities of the signals selected in CSSF-TOCSY experiments. This value was converted to g/100g of honey for consistency with the literature.

Instrumental Stability. To check the stability of the instrument, the spectra of synthetic honey solution (see next paragraph) were acquired weekly for one year and the integrated signal intensities of a reference signal were compared among the spectra. The variations were found to be in the range of 0.2% – 1%.

Analytical Performance of the Method. The linearity and accuracy (precision and trueness)⁴⁵ along with the limit of detection (LOD), limit of quantitation (LOQ), and recovery were evaluated as follows.

Linearity. The linearity was tested for all 22 carbohydrates by regression analysis on the absolute integrals of the peaks of the analytes with respect to their corresponding concentrations in standard solutions.

Limits of Detection and Quantitation. The detection (LOD) and quantitation (LOQ) limits are defined as the analyte concentrations whose signal responses are 3 and 10 times the average noise level, respectively. For each sugar, the LOD and LOQ limits were determined by plotting S/N ratio of CSSF-TOCSY selected peaks (extracted by the spectra of synthetic honeys) vs concentrations.

Accuracy. The accuracy of the method was determined on synthetic honey solutions. For each sugar the precision of the method was determined by calculating the relative standard deviations (RSD, %) of an integrated signal for nine repeated measurements (three different preparations of the synthetic honey solutions and three different data acquisitions). The relative error

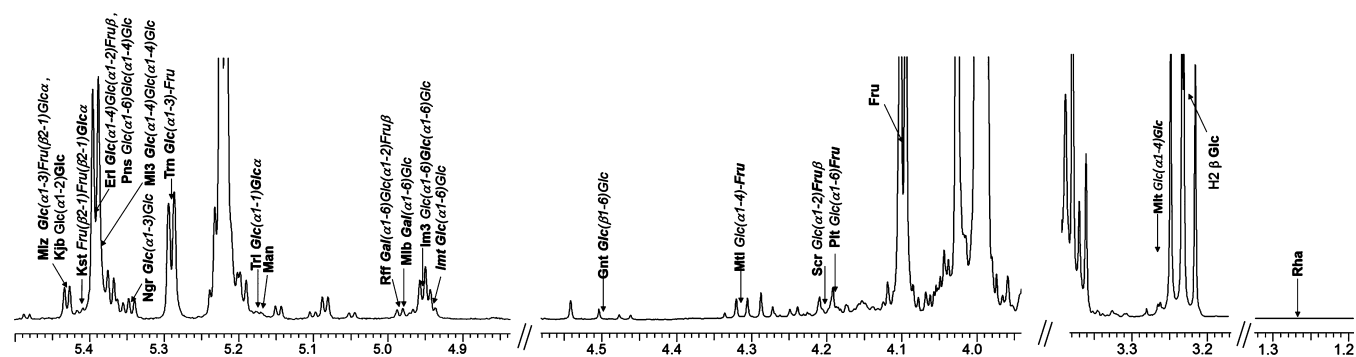


Figure 1. Selected regions of the ^1H spectrum of a honey sample diluted in the NMR buffer ($\text{pD} = 4.40$). The arrows indicate the selected excitation frequency for each of the 22 sugars under investigation. In the condensed name, the sugar moiety containing the anomeric proton excited by the CSSF is highlighted in bold on top of the corresponding arrow.

318 in concentration was derived by error propagation on the
319 model used for linear least-squares regression analysis.

320 The trueness of the method was expressed by assessing the
321 agreement between the measured (mc) and nominal (nc) con-
322 centrations of the sugar under investigation, as $(mc - nc) \times$
323 $100/nc$ (bias).

324 **Analytical Recovery.** Albeit the synthetic honey solutions
325 are prepared to reproduce as closely as possible the genuine
326 honey solutions, a recovery test was performed to evaluate
327 possible elusive matrix effects. The most detrimental matrix
328 effects include an alteration of the anomeric equilibria for
329 reducing sugars⁴⁶ and/or a shortening of the relaxation times
330 due to possible paramagnetic impurities.^{47,48} The achievement
331 of the same anomeric equilibrium between synthetic and gen-
332 uine honey solutions can be tested by comparing the ratio
333 between selected TOCSY signals from α - and β -glucose in both
334 genuine and synthetic honey. For all the samples tested in our
335 lab, this ratio was found to be invariant. Potential sources of
336 paramagnetic relaxation can be tested by comparing the relative
337 intensities of TOCSY subspectra from α - or β -glucose in gen-
338 uine and **synthetic honey**. When the (properly scaled) traces are
339 coincident, the relaxation effects for the two samples are similar
340 in the adopted conditions.

341 After these preliminary tests, the percentage of recovery was
342 determined for several sugars by using the gravimetric standard-
343 addition method.⁴⁹ The relative error on concentration in stan-
344 dard addition experiments was calculated through propagation
345 of uncertainty.⁵⁰

346 The measurements were performed for two different types
347 of honey (acacia and chestnut) on the following minor sugars:
348 sucrose, maltose, maltulose, palatinose, turanose, and man-
349 nose. In addition, raffinose and melezitose recoveries were
350 tested on honeydew honey. The stock solution contained the
351 eight minor sugars under investigation (6 mg/mL) dissolved in
352 the NMR buffer. A typical standard addition series consisted
353 of seven different concentration levels of each sugar. The seven
354 solutions were prepared by dissolving exactly 240 mg of
355 honey in different volumes of stock solution to reach increas-
356 ing concentrations of sugar and adjusting the final volume
357 to 1 mL with NMR buffer. The sugar concentration levels
358 were varied in the range of 0.6–3.0 g/100 g of honey. All the
359 honey samples (genuine and synthetic) were equilibrated
360 at room temperature for at least 24 h. The results obtained
361 by standard additions were compared with those obtained
362 by the calibration curves, and the percentage of recovery was
363 calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

364

365 The unambiguous identification and the accurate quantification
366 of sugars in natural matrices is hampered by their similar struc-
367 ture and similar polarity, their lack of chromophores and the
368 presence of many structural isomers. So far, NMR quantifica-
369 tion of sugars in natural samples has mostly focused on
370 conventional 1D proton NMR spectra, (without any previous
371 separation or preconcentration steps), and the spectral overlap
372 is dealt with by line shape deconvolution. This approach how-
373 ever can only be applied to those signals that are at least
374 partially resolved (a requirement hardly met in 1D spectra of
375 honey samples) and when all the mixture components are
376 already known.²⁹

377 As demonstrated in previous studies, frequency-selective 1D
378 TOCSY experiments can largely improve the discriminatory
379 power,³⁷ yet they still fail when severe spectral overlap occurs.
380 On this premise, chemical shift-selective filters deliver a dra-
381 matic selectivity improvement, and in combination with TOCSY,
382 they yield highly resolved subspectra of carbohydrates.³⁹

383 Because TOCSY propagates the magnetization only within a
384 spin system (namely, an ensemble of spins connected by net-
385 work of nonvanishing J -couplings), a monosaccharide will gen-
386 erally provide a 1D CSSF TOCSY spectrum containing the
387 same resonances (yet with different intensities) found in its 1D
388 spectrum. In the case of oligosaccharides, where each sugar unit
389 provides a separate spin system, CSSF-TOCSY experiments
390 can be tailored to highlight the resonances of each sugar unit.

391 In this work we have applied this method for the quantifica-
392 tion of 22 oligosaccharides generally present in honey samples:
393 4 monosaccharides (glucose, fructose, mannose, ramosse),
394 11 disaccharides (sucrose, trehalose, turanose, maltose, maltulose,
395 palatinose, melibiose, isomaltose, gentiobiose, nigerose, kojib-
396 iose), and 7 trisaccharides (raffinose, isomaltotriose, erlose,
397 melezitose, maltotriose, panose, and 1-kestose). The acquisition
398 of a selective 1D CSSF-TOCSY for a given sugar unit requires
399 the knowledge of the exact resonance frequency of the proton
400 that will provide the source magnetization. In the case of honey,
401 visual inspection of the 1D conventional spectrum (see **Figure 1**
402 for the anomeric region of honeys) is not a viable approach
403 because of the extensive signal crowding.

404 The optimal frequencies for selective excitation were there-
405 fore determined on standard solutions of each individual sugar
406 dissolved in the buffer solution (**Figure S-4**) rather than directly
407 on the honey sample under investigation. More precisely, the
408 1D standard spectrum and different CSSF-TOCSY spectra with
409 selective excitation of the most isolated signals (typically those

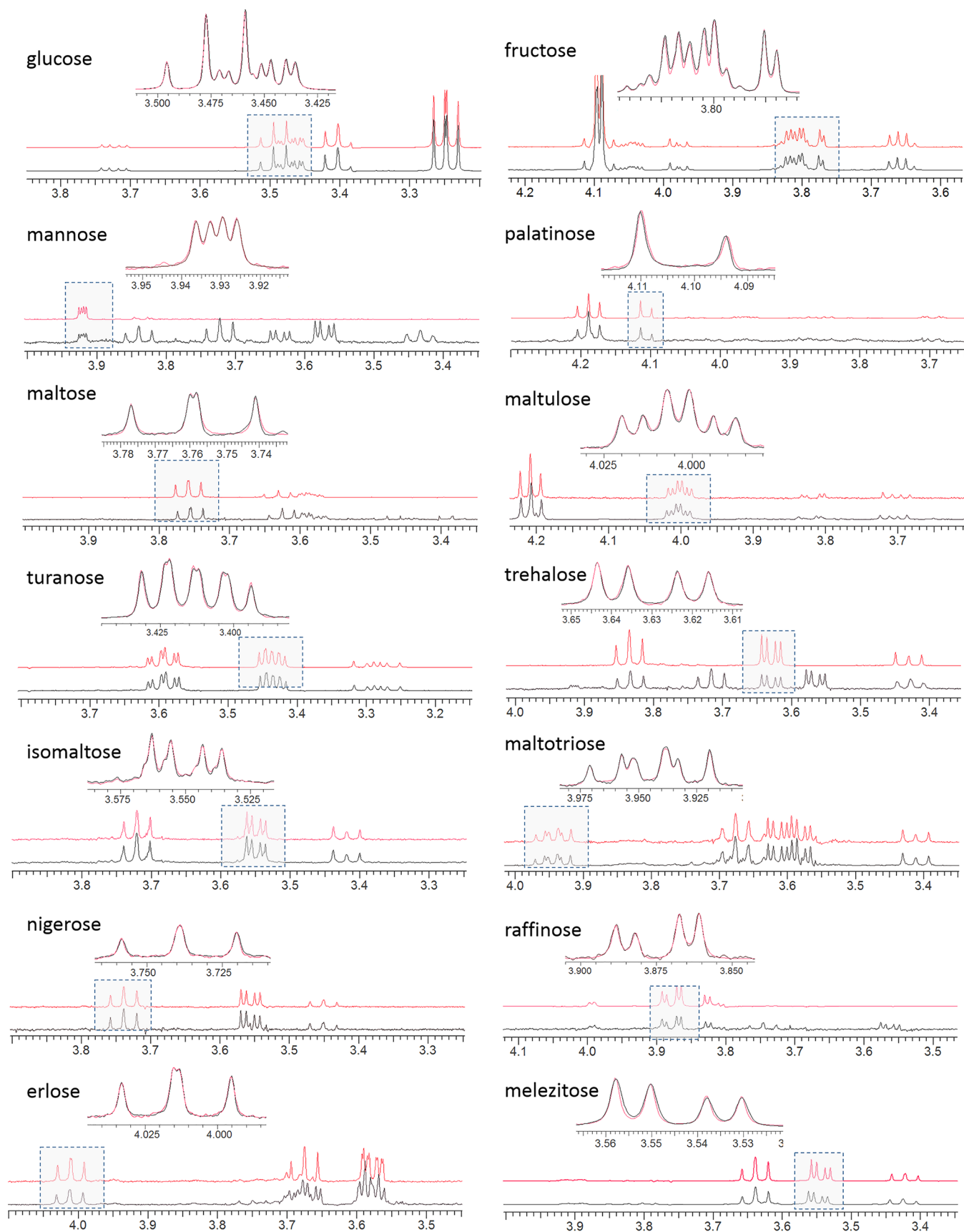


Figure 2. continued

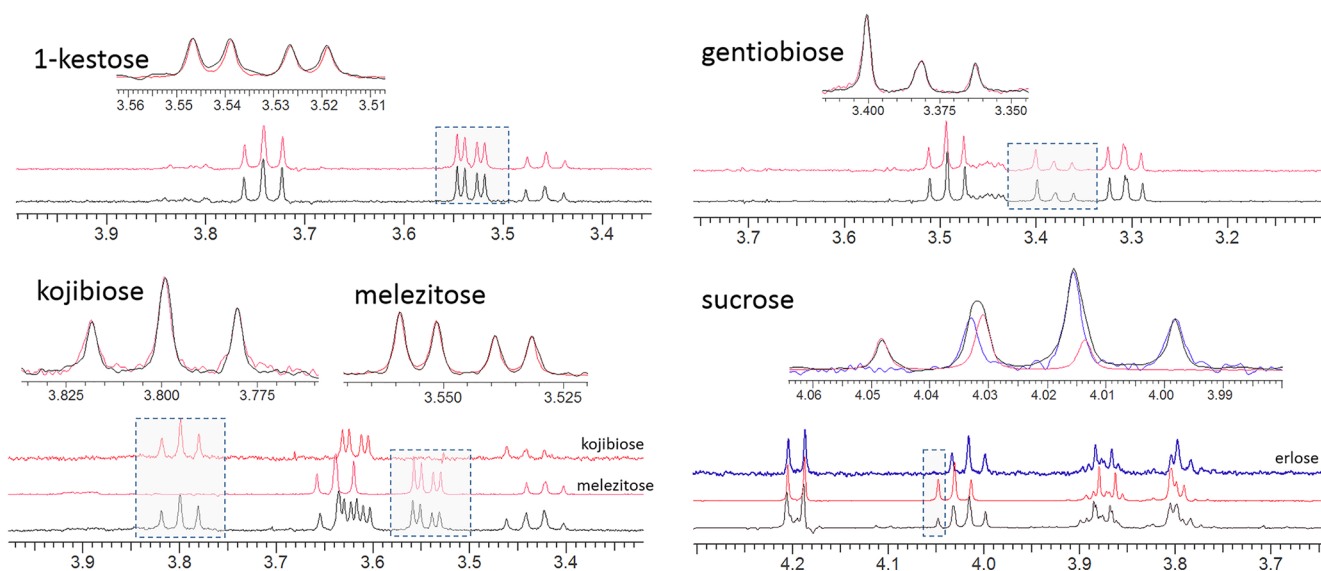


Figure 2. CSSF-TOCSY spectra of sugars in standard solution (red or blue traces) and in honey solution (black traces), respectively. The dashed area highlights the signal chosen for quantification. On top of the CSSF-TOCSY traces, the overlap between honey and standard signals inside the dashed area is reported.

from the anomeric protons) were acquired for each standard solution. The comparative analysis of these spectra allowed the identification of the optimal excitation frequencies for each sugar. The same approach was used to set up the optimal filter duration time and to identify the resonances specific for each sugar, so to ensure the accuracy of the quantification by integration. Experiments on spiked honey samples were performed to confirm the excitation frequencies and to exclude overlap with other unidentified sugars. These experiments confirmed that ^1H chemical shifts of sugars in honey are reproducible with a precision of ppb. Consequently, the excitation frequency can be easily calculated with reference to the H2 signal of internal β -glucose resonating at 3.213 ppm. In this way, all the analytical procedures are accurate and also become automatable.

Figure 1 reports selected regions of the ^1H spectrum of a honey sample, along with the excitation frequencies appropriately chosen for all the 22 carbohydrates under investigation.

In some cases, the severe crowding in the anomeric region does not allow for a clean selection of the resonances of a single saccharide, and the duration of the filter must be optimized. A higher selectivity is easily reached by using a longer chemical shift filtration time, yet at the price of signal loss by relaxation (Figure S-2 and S-3). As such, semiselective CSSF-TOCSY experiments are used whenever it is possible to find a well isolated signal stemming only from the sugar of interest. On the basis of such a criterion, a shorter filtration time (50 ms) was employed for 17 out of 22 investigated carbohydrates. The remaining five carbohydrates (palatinose, melibiose, raffinose, isomaltose, isomaltotriose), because of their structural similarity, display severe overlaps and require a longer filtration time (250 ms).

Eventually, we have been able to identify isolated signals that could be safely integrated and used for a quantitative analysis in all the 22 carbohydrates (see Table S-1 for summarized data). Figure 2 shows the specific TOCSY subspectra isolated from a solution of honey (black trace) and from the standard solutions (red trace).

Spectral intervals employed for quantification are also shown (Figure 2). Evidently, an entire multiplet is integrated for almost all sugars with the exception of sucrose and panose.

The disaccharide sucrose, ($\text{Glc}(\alpha 1-2\beta)\text{Fru}$) has a spectrum whose resonances are significantly overlapped with those of the trisaccharide erlose ($\text{Glc}(\alpha 1-4)\text{Glc}(\alpha 1-2\beta)\text{Fru}$) (Figure 2). However, whereas in the spectrum of erlose it is possible to isolate a quantifiable signal (belonging to the first glucose of the sequence, panel “erlose” in Figure 2), the sucrose spin systems are always partially overlapped with those of erlose, and its quantification is obtained by integration of the isolated portion of the triplet at 4.04 ppm (belonging to the fructose moiety) as evident in the relative panel of Figure 2. A similar case is found also for panose ($\text{Glc}(\alpha 1-6)\text{-Glc}(\alpha 1-4)\text{-Glu}$), whose signals are partially overlapped with sucrose resonances.

The most complicated case of maltose ($\text{Glc}(\alpha 1-4)\text{-Glc}$) is discussed in the Supporting Information (Figures S-5 and S-6).

Figure 2 reports the expansions of the integrated multiplets of 18 out of 22 sugars. There is an excellent match between the traces of the analyzed sugars in honey and in the standards, despite the complexity of this matrix. In the analyzed honey samples, the four sugars rhamnose, melibiose, panose, and isomaltotriose are always found to be under the limit of quantification. Samples spiked with standards of such sugars, however, reveal the possibility to detect them in much the same way as all the other saccharides (see Figure S-7). This result highlights the specificity of the experiment: because of the large dependence of the chemical shift on the molecular structure, the resulting pattern is virtually unique.⁵¹ Moreover, any possible overlap of signals from other sugars can be tracked as an alteration of the aforementioned traces either in the number of signals or in the signals shape (see Figure S-5 panel a). The case of raffinose in chestnut honey further substantiates the specificity of our procedure. About the resonance frequency of one anomeric proton of raffinose, the 1D spectrum of chestnut honey shows a doublet which is comfortably assigned to this sugar (Figure 3, top). However, when the CSSF is set on resonance with such doublet, the resulting TOCSY spectrum looks rather different from that of honey spiked with raffinose (Figure 3, bottom), where additional signals characteristic of this sugar are observed (red trace). Indeed, the CSSF-TOCSY prevents the occurrence of a false positive that may have

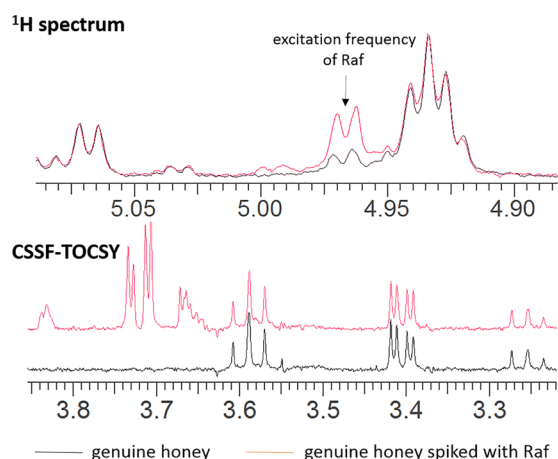


Figure 3. Top: conventional ^1H spectra of chestnut honey. Bottom: CSSF-TOCSY spectra of chestnut honey resulting from excitation at the frequency indicated. The black and the red traces refer to the genuine and the raffinose-spiked samples, respectively.

488 resulted by use of deconvolution on the conventional ^1H
489 spectrum.

490 After the setup of the experimental parameters, the analytical
491 performance of the method was tested. Linear responses were
492 observed, as demonstrated by the correlation coefficients (R^2)
493 larger than 0.995 for all analytes (Table 1 and Table S-2).

Table 1. Correlation Coefficient (R^2) and Limit of Detection (LoD) and of Quantification (LoQ) Expressed As g/100g

	sugar	R^2	LoQ ^a	LoD ^a
monosaccharide	glucose	0.9957	0.09	0.028
	fructose	0.9968	0.17	0.05
	rhamnose	0.9997	0.03	0.009
	mannose	0.9995	0.06	0.018
	disaccharide	sucrose	0.9995	0.05
	palatinose	0.9985	0.05	0.015
	maltose ^b	0.9995	0.14	0.04
	maltulose	0.9991	0.10	0.03
	turanose	0.9997	0.17	0.05
	trehalose	0.9978	0.05	0.015
	melibiose	0.9931	0.13	0.04
	isomaltose	0.9978	0.39	0.11
	gentiobiose	0.9991	0.09	0.03
	nigerose	0.9983	0.09	0.03
	kojibiose	0.9965	0.18	0.05
trisaccharide	isomaltotriose	0.9979	0.18	0.05
	raffinose	0.9996	0.21	0.06
	erlose	0.9981	0.06	0.018
	melezitose	0.9993	0.13	0.04
	maltotriose	0.9993	0.30	0.09
	1-kestose	0.9986	0.14	0.04
	panose	0.9999	0.20	0.06

^aFor the proposed methodology, these values may be lowered using different dilution or/and acquisition parameters. ^bFor maltose only one of the regression lines is reported (see SI).

494 The LoQ values, reported in Table 1, are all in the range of
495 0.03–0.2 g/100 g of honey except for isomaltose and malto-
496 triose, whose values are 0.39% and 0.30% respectively. These
497 LoQs values for most abundant sugars are similar to those
498 obtained with HPLC-PAD¹⁸ and lower than the values obtained

from fast capillary electrophoresis¹⁸ and from conventional ^1H
NMR-based methods.^{31,32}

The accuracy was examined on solutions of synthetic honey
by performing nine measurements (three different prepara-
tions and three acquisitions) for each sugar under investigation
All the determinations were carried out with the

Table 2. Precision (RSD %) and Trueness (bias %) in Synthetic Honey

sugars	concentration (g/100 g of honey)		RSD %	bias %
	nominal	measured		
glucose	30.000	29.818	1.85	0.61
fructose	38.400	38.018	1.68	0.99
rhamnose	1.223	1.199	1.71	1.96
mannose	1.612	1.623	1.24	0.69
sucrose	1.916	1.939	1.84	1.20
palatinose	1.203	1.167	3.15	3.01
maltose	0.894	0.903	3.38	1.02
maltulose	1.233	1.265	2.18	2.59
turanose	1.241	1.235	1.52	0.43
trehalose	2.071	2.044	2.08	1.30
melibiose	2.506	2.443	3.05	2.51
isomaltose	1.305	1.339	2.40	2.60
nigerose	0.654	0.662	2.18	1.28
gentiobiose	2.025	2.026	1.30	1.39
kojibiose	0.287	0.295	3.10	2.97
isomaltotriose	0.652	0.668	4.03	2.46
raffinose	1.669	1.660	1.02	0.56
erlose	0.916	0.909	2.48	0.78
melezitose	2.191	2.145	0.99	2.10
maltotriose	0.498	0.501	1.38	0.56
1-kestose	0.532	0.508	2.79	4.09
panose	1.341	1.284	3.14	4.23

same experimental conditions in different days. A satisfactory
precision is demonstrated by the RSD % on concentration
always lower than 4%. The low bias values (ranging from 0.43
for turanose to 4.2% for panose) demonstrate the correct quan-
tification of all the saccharides.

The reliability of the synthetic honey matrix in the setup of
the calibration curves was proven by the results of recovery
experiments carried out on three honey samples. The con-
centration values obtained by the calibration curves were
compared with those obtained by the standard addition method
(Figures S-8). In this latter case, the value of each sugar con-
centration can be extracted from the abscissa intercept of the
corresponding linear standard-addition curve.

An uncertainty of 1–2% in the concentration is obtained
from error propagation.

The absence of matrix effects (and consequently the validity
of calibration curves) was proven by the satisfactory recovery
values (Table 3-S): the recovery values ranged from 97.5% to
103.7% for all the sugars (with the exception of mannose,
whose concentration is very close to the limit of quantification).

Table 3 shows the composition of the 22 carbohydrates in
22 honey samples of 7 different botanical origins. The data
were compared with those previously reported in literature,
where the most frequently quantified sugars are glucose, fructose,
sucrose, maltose, turanose, threalose, isomaltose, and melezitose.
The content of the remaining sugars, detected by GC, is reported
in a few papers.

Table 3. Composition of the 22 Carbohydrates in the 22 Honey Samples of 7 Different Botanical Origins: Ac = Acacia, Ch = Chestnut, Li = Linden, Hd = Honeydew, Ci = Citrus, Co = Coriander, Cy = Cherry^a

	Ac-1	Ac-2	Ac-3	Ac-4	Ch-1	Ch-2	Ch-3	Li-1	Li-2	Li-3	Hd-1	Hd-2	Hd-3	Ci-1	Ci-2	Ci-3	Co-1	Co-2	Co-3	Cy-1	Cy-2	Cy-3
Glucose	24.6 ± 0.4	24.3 ± 0.4	29.3 ± 0.5	26.6 ± 0.5	19.5 ± 0.4	19.2 ± 0.4	19.0 ± 0.4	27.4 ± 0.5	30.4 ± 0.6	25.9 ± 0.5	18.7 ± 0.3	19.5 ± 0.4	22.9 ± 0.4	31.0 ± 0.6	32.2 ± 0.6	32.0 ± 0.6	31.4 ± 0.6	24.3 ± 0.4	25.4 ± 0.5	27.4 ± 0.5	28.4 ± 0.5	27.9 ± 0.5
Fructose	40.6 ± 0.5	40.7 ± 0.5	35.6 ± 0.4	38.0 ± 0.5	36.1 ± 0.5	33.7 ± 0.4	35.8 ± 0.5	32.3 ± 0.4	33.6 ± 0.4	31.1 ± 0.4	27.5 ± 0.4	23.8 ± 0.3	25.2 ± 0.3	36.3 ± 0.5	37.0 ± 0.5	36.0 ± 0.5	34.7 ± 0.4	32.3 ± 0.4	31.3 ± 0.4	36.0 ± 0.5	33.7 ± 0.4	31.2 ± 0.4
Rhamnose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD
Mannose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	0.246 ± 0.013	0.55 ± 0.03	0.085 ± 0.005	<0.06	0.142 ± 0.008	0.135 ± 0.008	<0.06	0.253 ± 0.014	0.146 ± 0.018	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.06	<0.06	0.125 ± 0.007
Sucrose	<0.05	1.95 ± 0.03	1.320 ± 0.025	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	0.058 ± 0.001	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	0.118 ± 0.002	0.251 ± 0.005	1.212 ± 0.022	1.582 ± 0.029	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	0.075 ± 0.001	<0.05	<0.05
Palatinose	0.15 ± 0.01	0.27 ± 0.02	0.44 ± 0.03	<0.05	0.48 ± 0.04	0.47 ± 0.04	1.09 ± 0.08	0.283 ± 0.022	0.222 ± 0.017	0.221 ± 0.017	0.25 ± 0.02	0.47 ± 0.04	0.353 ± 0.027	0.145 ± 0.011	0.191 ± 0.015	0.218 ± 0.017	0.129 ± 0.010	0.163 ± 0.013	0.299 ± 0.023	0.375 ± 0.029	0.262 ± 0.020	0.184 ± 0.014
Maltose	1.41 ± 0.04	1.35 ± 0.04	1.90 ± 0.06	1.81 ± 0.06	0.77 ± 0.02	0.58 ± 0.02	0.67 ± 0.02	0.541 ± 0.017	1.68 ± 0.05	1.39 ± 0.04	1.89 ± 0.06	2.08 ± 0.06	1.18 ± 0.04	1.29 ± 0.04	2.38 ± 0.07	1.82 ± 0.06	0.738 ± 0.023	0.647 ± 0.020	0.693 ± 0.022	0.761 ± 0.024	0.724 ± 0.023	0.745 ± 0.023
Maltulose	0.99 ± 0.02	1.19 ± 0.03	0.86 ± 0.02	0.61 ± 0.01	2.43 ± 0.05	2.55 ± 0.06	3.26 ± 0.07	1.39 ± 0.03	1.217 ± 0.027	1.17 ± 0.03	1.07 ± 0.02	2.10 ± 0.04	1.17 ± 0.02	0.837 ± 0.018	0.91 ± 0.02	0.789 ± 0.017	1.51 ± 0.03	1.44 ± 0.03	1.48 ± 0.03	1.294 ± 0.028	1.306 ± 0.028	1.352 ± 0.029
Turanose	2.17 ± 0.03	2.19 ± 0.03	2.01 ± 0.02	1.38 ± 0.02	1.58 ± 0.02	1.19 ± 0.02	1.990.03 ± 0.02	1.556 ± 0.024	1.593 ± 0.024	1.904 ± 0.029	1.24 ± 0.02	1.460 ± 0.022	1.314 ± 0.020	1.620 ± 0.025	1.916 ± 0.029	1.537 ± 0.023	1.741 ± 0.027	1.766 ± 0.027	1.727 ± 0.026	1.771 ± 0.027	1.733 ± 0.026	1.579 ± 0.024
Trehalose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.05	<LOD	0.074 ± 0.01	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	1.17 ± 0.02	<0.05	1.12 ± 0.02	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.05	<0.05	<LOD
Melbiiose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.13	<0.13	<0.13	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.13	<LOD
Isomaltose	0.806 ± 0.02	1.135 ± 0.03	0.842 ± 0.02	0.851 ± 0.02	3.19 ± 0.08	3.07 ± 0.07	2.61 ± 0.06	1.65 ± 0.04	2.10 ± 0.05	2.77 ± 0.07	0.89 ± 0.02	4.71 ± 0.11	1.85 ± 0.04	0.823 ± 0.020	1.041 ± 0.025	0.878 ± 0.021	1.96 ± 0.05	1.77 ± 0.04	1.87 ± 0.04	2.26 ± 0.05	2.09 ± 0.05	1.83 ± 0.04
Gentiobiose	<LOD	<LOD	<0.09	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.09	0.355 ± 0.005	0.341 ± 0.004	0.217 ± 0.003	<0.09	<0.09	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.09	<0.09	<0.09	<0.09	<0.09	<0.09
Nigerose	0.33 ± 0.01	0.35 ± 0.01	0.34 ± 0.01	0.245 ± 0.005	0.511 ± 0.011	0.459 ± 0.010	0.539 ± 0.012	0.480 ± 0.011	0.475 ± 0.010	0.587 ± 0.013	0.485 ± 0.011	0.608 ± 0.013	0.418 ± 0.009	0.282 ± 0.006	0.253 ± 0.005	0.234 ± 0.005	0.430 ± 0.009	0.474 ± 0.010	0.473 ± 0.010	0.410 ± 0.009	0.422 ± 0.009	0.462 ± 0.010
Kojibiose	0.82 ± 0.02	0.75 ± 0.02	0.68 ± 0.02	0.55 ± 0.02	0.88 ± 0.03	0.93 ± 0.03	1.00 ± 0.03	0.865 ± 0.027	1.15 ± 0.04	1.41 ± 0.04	0.97 ± 0.03	1.16 ± 0.04	0.921 ± 0.029	0.597 ± 0.018	0.549 ± 0.017	0.479 ± 0.015	0.839 ± 0.026	0.98 ± 0.03	0.921 ± 0.029	1.03 ± 0.03	1.00 ± 0.03	1.01 ± 0.03
Isomaltotriose	<0.18	<LOD	<0.18	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.18	<LOD	<LOD	<0.18	<LOD	<LOD	<0.18	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.18
Raffinose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	0.313 ± 0.003	<0.21	<0.21	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD
Eriose	1.41 ± 0.03	1.30 ± 0.03	1.01 ± 0.02	0.811 ± 0.02	<0.06	<0.06	<0.06	0.324 ± 0.008	0.313 ± 0.008	0.310 ± 0.008	1.26 ± 0.03	2.29 ± 0.06	0.503 ± 0.013	0.75 ± 0.02	0.732 ± 0.02	0.575 ± 0.014	<LOD	<0.06	<0.06	<0.06	<0.06	<0.06
Melezitose	<LOD	<LOD	<0.13	<LOD	<LOD	<0.13	0.77 ± 0.01	0.355 ± 0.003	<LOD	0.576 ± 0.006	5.64 ± 0.06	0.164 ± 0.002	4.03 ± 0.04	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD
Maltotriose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	1.62 ± 0.02	0.563 ± 0.008	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD
1-Kestose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<0.14	<0.14	0.243 ± 0.007	<0.14	<LOD	1.24 ± 0.03	<0.14	<0.14	0.166 ± 0.005	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD
Panose	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD	<LOD

^aExperimental uncertainties were derived by error propagation.

532 The main sugars, fructose (23.8–40.6%) and glucose
533 (19.0–32.2%), show a high variability. honeys with the lowest
534 percentages of fructose and glucose were those of nonfloral origin
535 (i.e., honeydew honeys⁵²) and chestnut, whereas citrus honey
536 contains the highest amount of these two monosacchar-
537 ides.^{18,52,53} Among disaccharides, maltose, turanose, maltulose,
538 and isomaltose are the most abundant in the majority of honey
539 samples, followed by nigerose, kojibiose, sucrose, and palatinose;
540 melibiose is the lowest concentrated disaccharide. Among the
541 identified and quantified trisaccharides, erlose is the most repre-
542 sented,¹⁵ while panose and isomaltotriose are always present in
543 concentrations lower than the LoD and LoQ.

544 ■ CONCLUSIONS

545 We have presented a new NMR approach based on CSSF-
546 TOCSY that allows the identification and quantification of car-
547 bohydrates directly in aqueous solutions without any pretreat-
548 ment of the sample. As shown in the present application,
549 the selectivity of the technique combined with the specificity
550 of chemical shifts relative to the molecular structure allows a
551 straightforward discrimination in honey of as many as 22
552 sugars, despite their structural similarity. The entire analytical
553 procedure also allows an accurate quantitative determination,
554 even at low quantification limits, for each of the 22 sugars inves-
555 tigated. The instrumental stability observed over about one year,
556 along with the optimum chemical shift reproducibility, make
557 the procedure amenable to automation and suitable to routine
558 analysis.

559 The technical advantages of the method over the correspond-
560 ing 2D TOCSY mainly stem from the much faster acquisition
561 and the higher digital resolution of 1D spectra with respect
562 to 2D maps. Notably, a 2D TOCSY experiment requires the
563 acquisition of hundreds of transients (typically 256), whereas the
564 1D CSSF-TOCSY only requires as many acquisitions as the
565 species to be quantified (22 in our case). In addition, possible t_1
566 noise in 2D TOCSY may preclude a correct integration of the
567 signals along the F2 dimension, where the resolution is highest.
568 Other multidimensional NMR methods such as HSQC have
569 been proposed for enhancing the resolution and reducing the
570 overlaps. Not surprisingly, for the case of carbohydrates in
571 honey, Petersen et al. showed that as many as 3072 transients
572 are required to provide a sufficient resolution in HSQC maps
573 acquired at 18.7 T (800 MHz).³⁰ In summary, the proposed
574 method proves to be a valid alternative to traditional methods
575 for carbohydrates identification and quantification. We have
576 chosen honey to demonstrate our approach for saccharides
577 determination since this natural matrix proves to be particularly
578 challenging. Just as clearly, however, the same approach can be
579 easily transferred to other food matrices such as fruit juices,
580 milk, and also to biofluids or even to new classes of molecules
581 other than carbohydrates.

582 ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

583 ■ Supporting Information

584 The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS
585 Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.analchem.7b03656.

586 Additional figures and tables as noted in text and experi-
587 mental details on the method, including the case of
588 maltose (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare the following competing financial
interest(s): Part of the present methodology is filed under
the Italian patent application: E. Schievano, F. Rastrelli,
102017000071682 (27/06/2017).

■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by the Università degli Studi di
Padova (CPDA150718/15 granted to E.S.). We thank prof.
Fabrizio Mancin for providing generous access to the NMR
instrumentation.

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