Improved  $\beta$ -glucan yield using an Aureobasidium pullulans M-2 mutant strain in a 200-L pilot scale fermentor targeting industrial mass production

SURE 静岡大学学術リポジトリ Shizuoka University REpository

メタデータ	言語: eng
	出版者:
	公開日: 2014-11-06
	キーワード (Ja):
	キーワード (En):
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URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10297/7951

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2	pullulans M-2 Mutant Strain in a 200-L Pilot Scale
3	Fermentor Targeting Industrial Mass Production
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34	<b>Abstract</b> $\beta$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 3)-D-glucans with $\beta$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 6)-glycosidic linked branches are known to be
35	immune activation agents and are incorporated in anti-cancer drugs and health-promoting
36	supplements. $\beta$ -Glucan concentration was 9.2 g/L in a 200-L pilot scale fermentor using
37	mutant strain Aureobasidium pullulans M-2, which was from an imperfect fungal strain
38	belonging to A. pullulans M-1. The culture broth of A. pullulans M-2 had a faint yellow color,
39	whereas that of the wild-type had an intense dark green color caused by the accumulation of
40	melanin-like pigments. β-Glucan produced by A. pullulans M-2 was identified as a
41	polysaccharide of D-glucose monomers linked by $\beta$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 3, 1 $\rightarrow$ 6)-glycosidic bonds through
42	GC/MS and NMR analysis. When a conventional medium was used in the culture of A.
43	<i>pullulans</i> M-2 in a 3-L jar fermentor, $\beta$ -glucan concentration was 1.4-fold that produced by
44	the wild-type. However, when medium optimized by statistical experimental design was used
45	with dissolved oxygen at 10%, the $\beta$ -glucan concentration was 9.9 g/L with yield of 0.52 (g
46	$\beta$ -glucan/g consumed sucrose), which was 2.9-fold that of the wild-type. This level of
47	productivity was reproduced when the fermentation was scaled up 200-L. The industrial
48	production of high $\beta$ -glucan without melanin-like pigments is highly expected as a
49	health-promoting supplement or functional food.

Keywords: Aureobasidium pullulans;  $\beta$ -glucan; black yeast; functional food; mutant

## 51 **1. Introduction**

52β-Glucans are polysaccharides of D-glucose monomers linked by β-glycosidic bonds. Various types of  $\beta$ -glucan occur in wild organisms as storage molecules of saccharides that are an 5354energy source and as structural molecules in cell walls. The β-glucan contained in mushrooms 55such as Agaricus bisporus [1] and Pleurotaceae citrinopileatus, which is a Chinese mushroom 56called Yuhuangmo [2], is also found in barley, oats and maize [3-5], and the cell walls of 57brewery yeast [6]. These β-glucans are considered non-digestible carbohydrates and classified 58as pathogen-associated molecular patterns, which can be recognized by pattern recognition 59receptors (PRRs). The effects of  $\beta$ -glucans on humans are considered to be mediated via 60 PRRs such as dectin-1 and Toll-like receptors (TLRs) that are located at the surface of 61 microbes and trigger various kinds of immune responses [7]. When PRRs are stimulated the 62 expression of a cytokine gene is upregulated, which causes subsequent stimulation of 63 cell-mediated immunity [8, 9]. This means that  $\beta$ -glucan increases phagocytosis activity and 64 nitric oxide production and inflammatory responses in vivo and in vitro [10]. The production 65 of inflammatory cytokines enhances various physiological activities such as immunopotentiation, anti-tumor activity, and cancer cell proliferation suppression that 66 67 maintain or promote good health [11–14]. Thus, applications of the  $\beta$ -glucans, not only as 68 food additives and functional foods, but also as medical, pharmaceutical, and cosmetic raw 69 materials are increasing year by year.



However, the supply of  $\beta$ -glucan cannot currently meet the demand because of low

71productivity and high cost [15, 16]. Commercial β-glucan is extracted from the yeast cell wall 72and purified, which is associated with a high manufacturing cost. Moreover, some allergens 73originating from the yeast may contaminate the  $\beta$ -glucan product. It has been found that 74β-glucan is produced by a microorganism belonging to Aureobasidium sp. (commonly known 75as "black yeast"), which is an imperfect fungus widespread in nature, that exhibits a function 76 equivalent, or superior, to that of the  $\beta$ -glucan derived from mushrooms [14, 16]. 77The present study aims to improve the production of  $\beta$ -glucan using strain 78improvement by UV mutation of the wild-type A. pullulans M-1. The culture medium of the 79 mutant strain was optimized to improve β-glucan productivity and scaled up to 200-L to target 80 industrial mass production. The chemical structure of the  $\beta$ -glucan produced by this method 81 was characterized by chemical analysis.

## 82 2. Materials and Methods

#### 83 **2.1. Microorganism and mutation**

The parent strain, *Aureobasidium pullulans* M-1 (Accession No. FERM BP-08615 deposited in the International Patent Organism Depositary, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, Tokyo, Japan), was cultured on a PDA (potato dextrose agar, Difco Laboratories Inc., Franklin lakes, NJ, USA) slant for 7 d. PDA is composed (per liter) of 4 g of potato extract, 20 g of dextrose, and 15 g of agar (pH 5.6). Colonies were suspended in 10 mL of phosphate buffered saline (PBS) and adjusted to a cell concentration of ~10<sup>6</sup> colony forming units (CFU)/mL. Aliquots (200  $\mu$ L) of this cell suspension were applied to a PDA

plate and the microbial cells were exposed to a 20-W UV lamp at a distance of 60 cm for 10
min. Under these conditions the cell survival rate was 0.1%. After UV exposure, the plates
were subjected to static culture at 25°C for 4 d. The colonies that formed on the plates were
cultured at 4°C for 3 d to induce chlamydospore formation.

#### 95 **2.2. Selection of a high β-glucan producer**

96 The first selection was done by visual observation and comparatively large colonies were

97 selected. The second selection was carried in flask culture. Production medium (40 mL),

98 composed (per liter) of 12 g of sucrose, 2 g rice of bran, 0.83 g of sodium ascorbate, and 0.23

99 g ascorbic acid, was placed in a 300-mL Erlenmeyer flask and sterilized at 121°C for 20 min.

100 The first selected colony was inoculated and cultured at 24.5°C in a rotary shaker at 150 rpm.

101 The productivity of  $\beta$ -glucan of the mutant strain was confirmed using a 3-L fermentor

102 (Bioneer-N300-3L, Marubishi Co. Ltd., Tokyo, Japan) with an aeration rate and agitation rate

103 of 0.5 vvm and 200 rpm, respectively.

#### 104 **2.3. Gene sequence analysis**

- 105 The ITS-5.8S and 28S rRNA-D1/D2 regions coding rRNA of the high  $\beta$ -glucan
- 106 producer were investigated to confirm the strain species and its morphological and

107 physiological properties according to previous reports [17, 18].

### 108 2.4. GC and EI-GC/MASS analysis

109 The sugar linkages of the  $\beta$ -glucan were analyzed according to the method described by

Anumura *et al.* [18]. Briefly, 100 g of sample were used for β-glucan extraction. Extracted
β-glucan (9 mg) was completely methylated by 100 mg of powdered NaOH and 0.6 mL of
methyl iodide followed by hydrolysis to form methylated monosaccharide. The methylated
monosaccharide was hydrogenated and acetylated to partially methylated alditol acetate. The
resulting alditol acetate was dissolved in chloroform and its chemical structure was analyzed
by GC (HP5890 series II, Hewlett-Packard, Palo Alto, CA, USA) and EI-GC/MASS (JMS
DX-303, JEOL, Tokyo, Japan) [19].

#### 117 **2.5. NMR spectroscopy**

118 Purified sample was dissolved in dimethyl Sulfoxide-d6 (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>) and then heated at 80°C

119 for 30 min, followed by H-D exchange by adding deuterium water. <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra were

120 recorded in DMSO-d<sub>6</sub> at room temperature using a Varian INOVA 500 NMR

121 spectrometer (Varian, Palo Alto, CA, USA) operating at 125.7 MHz. Purified sample

122 was dissolved in DMSO-d<sub>6</sub> and then heated at 100°C for 1 h, and <sup>1</sup>H NMR NMR spectra

123 were recorded using an INOVA 600 NMR spectrometer at 599.5 MHz [20].

## 124 **2.6. Enzymatic analysis**

- 125 Purified sample (14.5 mg) was digested by 7.82 mg of cellulase I containing endo
- 126  $\beta$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 3)-glucanase (Wako Pure Chem., Osaka, Japan) or 5.34 mg of cellulase II containing
- 127  $\beta$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 3)-glucanase (Seikagaku Co., Tokyo, Japan) at 40°C for 16–24 h in acetate buffer (pH
- 128 4.5). The degradation product was analyzed by HPLC (LC-20A, Shimadzu, Kyoto, Japan)
- 129 with a TSKgel Sugar AXG column (15 cm × 4.6 mm I.D.) (Tosoh Bioscience LLC, Tokyo,

130 Japan). The eluent was 0.5 M potassium borate buffer (pH 8.7) at 70°C and the eluent flow

131 rate was 0.4 mL/min. Excitation and emission wavelengths were 320 and 430 nm,

132 respectively.

#### 133 **2.7.** Optimization of β-glucan production in flask culture and confirmation of

#### 134 productivity in the 3- and 200-L fermentors

135 Box Behnken experimental design [21–23] was used to optimize the sucrose, rice bran, and

136 sodium ascorbate concentrations in flask cultures. Statistical analysis was performed using

137 STATISTICA (StatSoft Inc., OK, USA), and the regression of the parameters was solved by

138 Mathcad 2001 Professional (Mathsoft Engineering and Education Inc., Cambridge, MA,

139 USA). To confirm the possibility of industrial scale production of  $\beta$ -glucan by the mutant

140 strain, 3-L fermentor (MDL300, Marubishi Co. Ltd., Tokyo, Japan) and 200-L stirred-tank

141 reactors (Komatsugawa Chem. Eng. Co. Ltd., Tokyo, Japan) with working volumes of 2 L and

142 120 L, respectively, were used for  $\beta$ -glucan production. An optimized medium was used and

143 the dissolved oxygen concentration (DO) was controlled at approximately 0, 10, and 30% by

a DO controller with an agitation rate in the region of 100 to 150 rpm under a constant

aeration rate of 0.5 vvm. Culture temperature was controlled at 24.5°C. During cultivation,

146 the cell morphology was observed using an optical microscope (BX51, Olympus, Tokyo,

147 Japan).

## 148 **2.8. Measurement of β-glucan**

149 A portion (100 g) of the culture broth was centrifuged at  $190 \times g$ , and the resulting

supernatant was precipitated by adding 70% ethanol. The ethanol precipitate that contained high-molecular-weight substances was separated by centrifugation and digested with  $\alpha$ -amylase, protease, and amyloglucosidase. The enzyme-treated solution was diluted with a four-fold volume of 95% ethanol to allow precipitation of β-glucan. The resultant 95% ethanol precipitate moiety was subjected to air-drying overnight and further air-drying at 105°C for 3 h before being weighed. This gave the weight of the β-glucan content in the culture broth.

## 157 **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1. Screening of the high β-glucan producer**

159A. pullulans M-1 cells were UV-irradiated at 0.1% of survival rate and 400 colonies of 160comparatively large sizes compared to the wild-type were selected; this was followed by a 161second selection. The colonies selected in the second screening described above were 162inoculated into 300-mL Erlenmeyer flasks containing 40 mL of the production medium and 163cultured for 7 d. Among the 400 colonies, a colony producing 5 g/L of β-glucan was selected 164and designated as A. pullulans M-2 (Accession No. FERM BP-08615 deposited in the 165International Patent Organism Depositary, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science 166 and Technology).

# 167 **3.2. Identification of** *A. pullulans* **M-1 and M-2**

168 Molecular phylogenetic trees for the base sequence of the ribosomal RNA gene regions,

ITS-5.8S and 28SrRNA-D1/D2, were created by the neighbor-joining method using the top 170 20 sequences among the analogous sequences detected in an international DNA database. 171Comparison of ITS-5.8S and 28SrR sequences shows that the mutant strain classically 172defined as A. pullulans (Fig. 1) and belonging to an imperfect fungus A. pullulans is the same

173species as the parent strain A. pullulans M-1.

169

#### 1743.3 Comparison of the morphology of the parent strain with that of A. pullulans M-2 and 175their $\beta$ -glucan productivities

176 When A. pullulans M-2 was cultured on PDA plate medium for 1 week, the shape of the

177vegetative hypha and the pattern of conidium formation were similar to those of the parent

178strain (Fig. 1A-1 and B-1) although the colony colors differed. The culture broth of A.

179 pullulans M-1 had a dark green color, which is typical for A. pullulans (Fig. 1A-2), whereas A.

180 pullulans M-2 exhibited a faint yellow color (Fig. 1B-2), suggesting that the M-2 strain does

181 not accumulate any melanin-like pigment. The color of this product is very important to its

182 commodity value because consumers prefer a transparent product rather than a dark one. This

183 indicates that the  $\beta$ -glucan produced by A. pullulans M-2 is suitable for commercial product.

- 184 The  $\beta$ -glucan productivity of A. pillulans M2 was compared to that of the parent strain
- 185 using a 3-L jar fermentor. The β-glucan concentration of A. pillulans M2 was 5.0 g/L at a
- 186 culture time of 144 h, while that of the parent strain was 3.5 g/L (Fig. 2C).
- 187 3.4. Chemical structure of the  $\beta$ -glucan produced by *A. pullulans* M-2

The <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra of the β-glucan produced by *A. pullulans* M-2 are shown in Fig. 3. The <sup>1</sup>H signals at 4.5 ppm were assigned to the β-(1 $\rightarrow$ 3)-linkage (Fig. 3A). The <sup>13</sup>C signals at 103, 86, 68, and 61 ppm were assigned to the C-1 carbons of the β-(1 $\rightarrow$ 3; 1 $\rightarrow$ 6)-linkages, C-3 carbons of the β-(1 $\rightarrow$ 3)-linkages, branched C-6 carbons (CH<sub>2</sub>-O-R), and unbranched C-6 carbons (CH<sub>2</sub>-OH), respectively (Fig. 3B).

193 The β-glucans produced by A. pullulans M-1 were detected by GC and EI-GC/MASS 194 after three consecutive methylations and their ratios are shown in Table 1. The ratio of 195branched to total glucose residues was higher than 60%, indicating that the  $\beta$ -glucans 196 produced by A. pullulans M-2 were highly branched polysaccharides. Furthermore, from the 197 HPLC analysis, the enzymatic digestion products were glucose and gentibiose (data not 198shown), suggesting the glucose in the glucan molecule could be assumed to be the  $\beta$ -anomer. 199 From these chemical and enzymatic analyses, a possible chemical structure of the  $\beta$ -glucan 200 produced by A. pullulans M-2 was derived and is given in Fig. 4.

## **3.5. Improvement of the β-glucan productivity**

Independent variables corresponding to the sucrose  $(x_1)$ , rice bran  $(x_2)$ , and sodium ascorbate (x<sub>3</sub>) concentrations were varied according to the Box-Behnken design, and the  $\beta$ -glucan concentrations at 120 and 144 h were recorded as responses and the statistical analyses are shown in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. The effect of the sodium ascorbate concentration  $(x_3)$ was negligible in this model, because its p-value was higher than 0.05. According to the analysis of variance, the responses were generated by a non-linear quadratic model described

as follows,

209 
$$Z = -1.77 \times 10^{-1} x_1 + 1.19 \times 10^{-2} x_1^2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} x_2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} x_2^2 + 3.79 \times 10^{-2} x_1^2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} x_2^2 + 3.79 \times 10^{-2} x_1^2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} x_2^2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} x_2^2 + 3.79 \times 10^{-2} x_1^2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} x_2^2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} \times 10^{-1} x_2^2 + 3.60 \times 10^{-1} \times 10$$

210 The correlation coefficient of this model is 0.89. Optimized sucrose and rice bran

211 concentrations were calculated to be 20 and 4.5 g/L, respectively. Using this optimized

212 medium, a  $\beta$ -glucan production level was expected to be 10.1 g/L.

#### 213 **3.6.** Scale-up of β-glucan production in a 200-L fermentor

214 To confirm the possibility of industrial scale production of  $\beta$ -glucan by *A. pullulans* M-2,

215  $\beta$ -glucan production using the optimized medium was carried out in a 3-L jar fermentor with a

216 controlled dissolved oxygen level (DO) during the production phase. When the DO level was

217 controlled at approximately 0% (Fig. 5A-1), the  $\beta$ -glucan concentration was 3.5 g/L (Fig.

218 5A-2). However, when the DO level was controlled at 10 or 30%, the  $\beta$ -glucan concentrations

219 were 9.9 and 9.0 g/L, respectively. The  $\beta$ -glucan yields, based on consumed sucrose at DO

levels of 0, 10, and 30%, were 0.28, 0.52, and 0.49 (g  $\beta$ -glucan/g consumed sucrose),

respectively. This indicates that the 10% DO level in the production phase was optimal for

222 β-glucan production. This result was scaled-up to the 200-L fermentor with the optimized

223 medium. The DO level was decreased gradually and controlled at 10% from the culture time

of 50 h. The reducing sugar concentration decreased gradually and was 2 g/L at the culture

time of 144 h. The β-glucan concentration increased with decreasing reducing sugar

226 concentration and reached 9.2 g/L with a  $\beta$ -glucan yield of 0.51 (g  $\beta$ -glucan/g sucrose) at 144

227 h (Fig. 5B), which was similar to that of the 3-L jar fermentor, suggesting that  $\beta$ -glucan

228 production in a 200-L stirred tank reactor was reproducible.

229	$\beta$ -Glucan production levels observed in this present study were compared to
230	production levels reported in related studies (Table 4). Sucrose was used as a carbon source.
231	As a nitrogen source, NaNO3 and (NH4)2 were used as inorganic nitrogen sources; otherwise
232	yeast extract or rice bran were used as organic nitrogen sources. Typical A. pullulans strains
233	produced 4.0 g/L of $\beta$ -glucan at minimum yield, regardless of whether inorganic or organic
234	nitrogen sources were used. The productivity of $\beta$ -glucan using the mutant strain A. <i>pullulans</i>
235	M-2 was 1.4-fold higher than that of A. pullulans M-1. Moreover, when the optimized
236	medium was used, the $\beta$ -glucan yield and productivity were 2.9 times higher than that of the
237	wild-type. Based on the scale up criteria, such as agitation power per volume in the 200-L
238	stirred tank reactor, the $\beta$ -glucan yield and productivity were maintained in a 10-kL stirred
239	tank reactor (data not shown) targeting for commercial production.
240	Recently, this $\beta$ -glucan has become commercially valuable as a supplement for
241	boosting immunity against the common cold, flu, allergies, high cholesterol, diabetes, and
242	cancer. In addition, $\beta$ -glucan is applied to the skin for dermatitis, eczema, wrinkles, bedsores,
243	wounds, burns, diabetic ulcers, and radiation burns. This $\beta$ -glucan produced by the black
244	yeast mutant is colorless and does not contain melanin-like pigments, and is very suitable for

245 industrial level production.

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324 **Figure Legends** 

- 325 Fig. 1. Phylogenetic tree of A. pullulans M-1 and M-2. ITS-5.8S (A) and 28SrRNA-D1/D2
- 326 (B) regions coding rRNA gene from genomic DNA of A. pullulans M-1 and M-2 were
- analyzed, respectively.
- 328 **Fig. 2.** Morphological properties and  $\beta$ -glucan production in flask culture. The shape of the
- 329 colony on PDA plate: A. pullulans M-1 (A-1) and M-2 (B-1). Bars in A-1 and B-1 denote 1
- 330 cm. Appearance of culture broth of flask culture: A. pullulans M-1 (A-2) and M-2 (B-2).
- 331 Mycelial morphology of β-glucan producers: A. pullulans M-1 (A-3) and M-2 (B-3). Bars in
- 332 A-3 and B-3 denote 20 μm. Time courses of β-glucan production of A. pullulans M-1 and
- M-2 in 3-L jar fermentor (C). Open and closed circles in C denote A. *pullulans* M-1 and M-2,
  respectively.
- Fig. 3. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (A) and <sup>13</sup>C NMR (B) spectra of  $\beta$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 3,1 $\rightarrow$ 6)-glucan produced by *A*. *pullulans* M-2.

**Fig. 4.** Estimated chemical structure of β-(1 $\rightarrow$ 3,1 $\rightarrow$ 6)-glucan produced by *A. pullulans* M-2.

**Fig. 5.** Optimal DO level in a 3-L jar fermentor (A) and scale up of  $\beta$ -glucan production to a 200-L pilot scale fermentor with a working volume of 120 L (B) in the culture of *A. pullulans* M-2. Optimized medium, composed of 20 g/L of sucrose, 4.5 g/L of rice bran, and 0.5 g/L of sodium ascorbate, was used. Dotted, solid, and thick lines in A-1 denote DO level controlled at approximately 0, 10, and 30%, respectively. Triangles, circles, and squares in A-1 denote DO level controlled at approximately 0, 10, and 30%, respectively. Closed and open symbols

- 344 in A-2 indicate  $\beta$ -glucan and residual sugar concentration, respectively. Dotted line and open
- and closed circles in B denote DO level (%), residual sugar, and  $\beta$ -glucan concentrations,
- 346 respectively.

Glycoside linkage	Ratio of linkage type (%)
Non-reducing end of glucose	39.1
$\rightarrow$ 3 glucose 1 $\rightarrow$	24.6
$\rightarrow$ 3, 6 glucose 1 $\rightarrow$	36.3

Table 1. GC and EI-GC/MASS analysis of methylated  $\beta$ -glucan

Medium composition (g/L)			$\beta$ -glucan concentration (g/L)		
Sucrose	Rice bran	Sodium ascorbate	At 120 h	At 144 h	
10	1	1.5	3.63	3.65	
20	1	1.5	4.33	3.71	
10	1	1.5	4.73	4.62	
20	5	1.5	8.87	8.44	
10	3	0.5	5.50	4.96	
20	3	0.5	8.89	9.17	
10	3	2.5	4.92	4.52	
20	3	2.5	8.36	7.41	
15	1	0.5	2.97	4.30	
15	5	0.5	6.94	6.46	
15	1	2.5	2.72	2.85	
15	5	2.5	6.43	5.72	
15	3	1.5	6.99	6.14	
15	3	1.5	6.82	6.44	
15	3	1.5	7.02	6.32	
15	2	0.8	6.85	6.52	

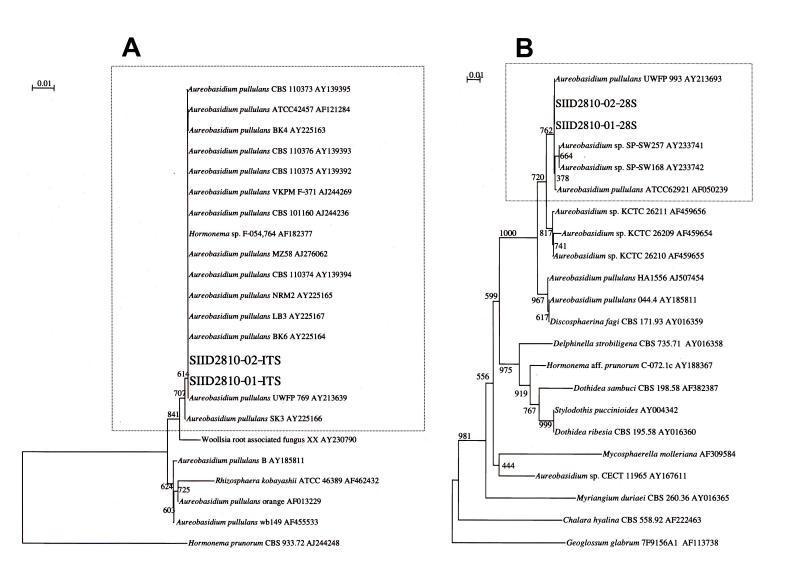
Table 2. Box-Behnken medium design and runs

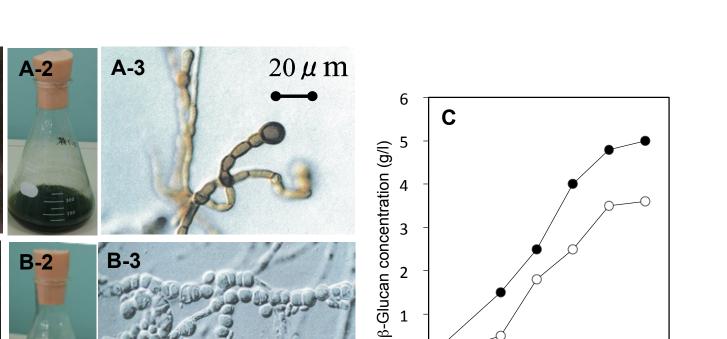
Variable	Sum of squares	Degrees of	Mean	F-value	P-value
		freedom	square		
Sucrose (%)	15.226	2	7.633	11.103	0.004
Rice bran (%)	22.001	2	11.001	16.000	0.002
Sodium ascorbate (%)	2.417	2	1.209	1.758	0.233
Error	5.500	8	0.688		

 Table 3. Statistical analysis of the flask cultures

Strain	Culture	Medium	Yield (g/L)	Time (h)	Productivity (g/L/h)	Reference
A. pullulans	Flask	Sucrose NaNO3	2.8	96	2.9×10 <sup>-2</sup>	15
A. pullulans	Flask	Sucrose (NH4)2	4.0	72	5.6×10 <sup>-2</sup>	14
A. pullulans MS-822 (KCTC1179BP)	50-L fermentor	Sucrose Yeast extract	2.5	168	1.5×10 <sup>-2</sup>	23
A. pullulans M-1	3-L fermentor	Sucrose Rice bran	3.5	144	2.4×10 <sup>-2</sup>	This work
A. pullulans M-2	3-L fermentor	Sucrose Rice bran	5.0	144	3.5×10 <sup>-2</sup>	This work
A. pullulans M-2	3-L fermentor	Optimized medium	9.9	144	6.9×10 <sup>-2</sup>	This work
A. pullulans M-2	200-L fermentor	Optimized medium	9.2	144	6.4×10 <sup>-2</sup>	This work

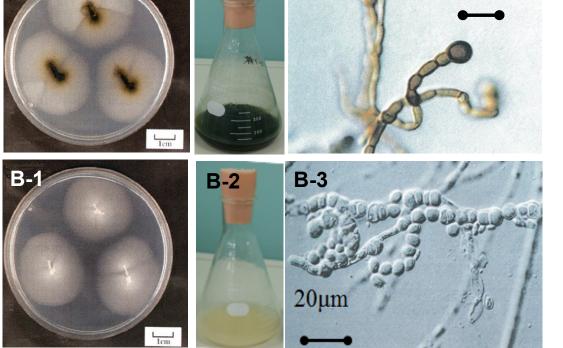
Table 4. Comparison of  $\beta$ -glucan productivities in various *Aureobasidium* strains





0

0



A-1

20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 Culture time (h)

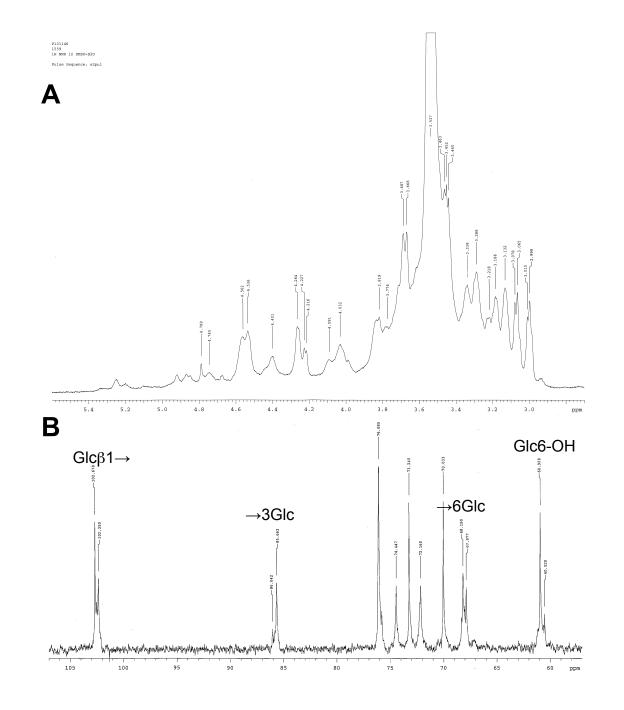
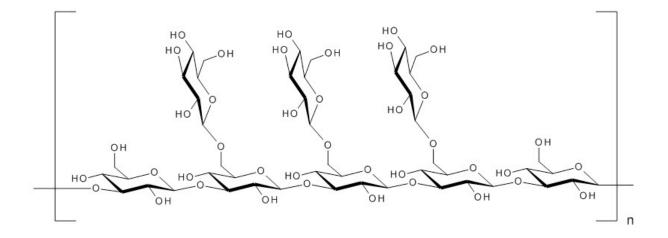


Fig. 4, Moriya et al.



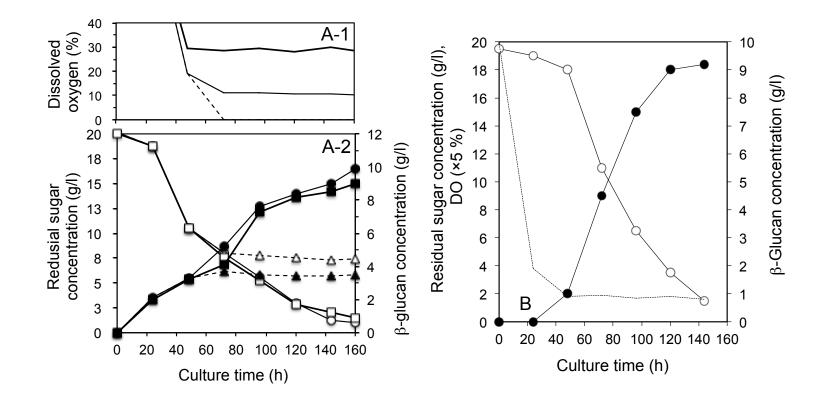


Fig. 5, Moriya et al.