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NON-CONVENTIONAL FOOD PLANTS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

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Non-conventional edible plants (PANC in Portuguese) are edible plant species that offer several nutritional benefits. However, their demand is limited due to the population's low knowledge and lack of consumption habits. The term was introduced by biologist and professor Valdely Ferreira Kinupp, who highlighted the importance of these plants in food diversification and nutritional security. In a study conducted by Mendes et al. (2024), the physicochemical and sensory properties of mixed juices made from orange, sorrel, and taro were evaluated. Four formulations were analyzed, and the results indicated that taro and sorrel are suitable to complement the preparation of juices. The addition of 30% taro resulted in a more significant increase in bioactive compounds, including polyphenols, beta-carotene, and ascorbic acid. The higher phenolic content in this treatment provided greater antioxidant activity (85.22 ± 13.88). The addition of 50% sorrel, in addition to contributing to the physicochemical parameters, improved sensory acceptance. In another study, the incorporation of different proportions of fresh ora-pro-nóbis leaves in chocolate cakes prepared from commercial premixes was analyzed. The addition of ora-pro-nóbis enhanced the nutritional value of the cakes by reducing the total caloric content without significantly altering the lipid content, while also promoting moisture retention (Rosa *et al.*, 2020). Both studies highlight the potential of PANC in

food formulation, demonstrating its contribution to food diversification and enhancing the nutritional quality of various products.

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