

9th International Symposium on Recent Advances in Food Analysis (RAFA 2019 – Prague)

The International Symposium on Recent Advances in Food Analysis (RAFA) is held every two years in Prague, Czech Republic. It is organized by the University of Chemistry and Technology (UCT) of Prague and the Wageningen Food Safety Research (WFSR) part of Wageningen University & Research (The Netherlands) and it is chaired by Prof. Jana Hajslova & Prof. Michel Nielen. This year, it was celebrated from 5th-8th of November and, according to the records, it received more than 750 participants from over 60 countries.

RAFA gives the opportunity to exchange the most recent advances in food analysis. It provides an overview of the trends in analytical and bioanalytical strategies aimed to food quality and safety control and it is a forum for presentation of challenges/new approaches in food and natural product analysis. In this sense, RAFA addressed sessions on many different topics such as mycotoxins, marine and plant toxins, migrants from food contact materials, processing contaminants, pesticide and veterinary drug residues, industrial contaminants, allergens and antinutrients, metals and metalloids, healthy nutrients, chemometrics, authenticity and food fraud, omics in food analysis, food forensics, microplastics, human biomonitoring, portable on-site food analysis, etc.

The conference started on Tuesday 5th with the welcome session and three plenary lectures by Prof. Michael Rychlik, Christopher Elliott and Jana Hajslova on recent issues in food analysis. Later on, the conference was split into three parallel sessions in which oral presentations, particularly those by young scientists, were encouraged. The first session was aimed to recent issues and novel approaches, whereas the second and the third addressed the food authenticity and fraud topic and the analysis of biologically active, health promoting food components and food allergens.

The following days, three parallel sessions covering different topics were also run in different halls. Vendor seminars presenting the latest advances on instrumentation were also organized during lunch times. The exhibition and poster sessions were held during coffee breaks and lunches in order to make easier the exchange of ideas and the establishment of collaborations for future works.

On Wednesday 6th, sessions took place from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. During this day, it was possible to attend several workshops and interactive seminars in addition to the exhibition area. Among others, the European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs) presented their concerns in collaboration with international laboratories. Professor Rainer Malisch from Freiburg (Germany) presented the achievements and challenges of EURLs for analysis of halogenated persistent organic pollutants in feed and food. This session was a good occasion to update the state of the art regarding emerging pollutants food analysis. In the afternoon, Professor Nicholas Birse (Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom) gave an interesting talk entitled "*A comparison of high- and low-resolution ambient mass*

spectrometry techniques to characterize poultry meat” in Food authenticity & Fraud II session.

On Thursday 7th, another interesting workshop about portable food analysis and citizen science was organized where results from food smartphone project were presented.

This session was first introduced by professor Michel Nielen who gave a talk entitled “*toward portable RAFA*” for introducing the audience on the topic of the session. Moreover, Professor Marco Blokland (Wageningen Food Safety Research, Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands) presented a new portable mass spectrometer prototype based on GC-MS for on-site analysis of food contaminants. After the conference day, Gala dinner was celebrated at Martinic palace in the Prague Castle area. Attendees to the conference had the opportunity to enjoy a great dinner with typical Czech food and live traditional music with Czech group dances.

On Friday 8th, the conference started at 9 a.m. with three parallel sessions (Food contaminants and residues, General food analysis and omics approaches in food analysis). In this last session, among others, Professor Jürgen M. Kuballa from GALAB laboratories GmbH, Hamburg-Germany, presented an interesting talk entitled “*Recent advances in ion mobility high resolution mass spectrometry analysis – LC-IMS-QTOF MS- as a powerful tool for organic food authenticity*”. A summary session entitled “Food analysis beyond imagination” on RAFA 2019 highlights was held by Prof. Michele Suman (Barilla Advanced Research Laboratories, Parma, Italy). In addition, RAFA 2019 poster award and sponsored poster awards were given to the best poster presentations in different fields and the conference finished with a presentation of next RAFA 2021 by the chairs of the conference Jana Hajslova and Michel Nielen.

As can be observed, the organizers prepared a balanced programme including oral presentations by young scientist, workshops and interactive seminars. For this reason, I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this nice and useful event, and that is why I would like to acknowledge SECyTA for the travel support and the opportunity to attend the RAFA 2019 conference.

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