

Nanoscale Materials for Instrumental Analysis of Mycotoxins

Subjects: **Food Science & Technology**

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With the continuous development of nanotechnology and materials science, a variety of nanoscale materials have been developed for purifying complex food matrices or providing response signals for accurate and rapid detection of various mycotoxins in foods. Mycotoxins are highly toxic, widely contaminated, and difficult to remove. They can enter and enrich the food chain through foodstuffs and animal-derived products such as meat, milk, and eggs and ultimately penetrate into organisms, causing reproductive abnormalities, immunosuppression, cancer, and other serious diseases, which pose a serious threat to human health.

mycotoxins

nanoscale materials

accurate and rapid detection

food

1. Introduction

To date, food safety remains one of the major issues of widespread concern worldwide. The presence of toxic and hazardous substances in food is an important aspect that contributes to food safety problems ^{[1][2]}. Foods such as grains, oils, and fats are prone to contamination by fungi such as *Aspergillus*, *Penicillium*, and *Fusarium* at various stages, including production, processing, storage, and transportation ^{[3][4][5]}. Under conditions of high temperature and humidity, these microorganisms can produce and accumulate mycotoxins and secondary metabolites that serve as typical food contaminants. Mycotoxins are highly toxic, widely contaminated, and difficult to remove ^{[6][7][8]}. They can enter and enrich the food chain through foodstuffs and animal-derived products such as meat, milk, and eggs and ultimately penetrate into organisms, causing reproductive abnormalities, immunosuppression, cancer, and other serious diseases, which pose a serious threat to human health ^{[9][10]}. In addition, most fungi are capable of producing multiple toxins simultaneously, making the co-contamination of food with multiple toxins highly common. The cumulative or synergistic effects of these toxins can lead to more significant toxic effects than single toxins ^{[11][12]}, further highlighting the importance of controlling and monitoring mycotoxins in food. Consequently, the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Codex Alimentaria Commission (Codex Alimentaria) have jointly established limits and detection requirements for biotoxins, including mycotoxins ^{[13][14]} (**Table 1**). It is essential to strengthen the research on specific, sensitive, rapid, and reliable strategies for mycotoxins detection in food to safeguard human health effectively ^{[15][16]}.

Table 1. Maximum permissible limits for mycotoxins in foods of different countries or organizations.

The United States	Total amount of AFB in food: <20 µg/kg; DON: <1000pg/kg, ZEN: <100 pg/kg; Milk and dairy products: AFM ₁ ≤ 0.5 µg/kg.
European Union	Agricultural products: Total amount of AFBs: <4 µg/kg, AFB ₁ : <2 µg/kg, OTA: <3 µg/kg, DON: <1000 µg/kg, ZEN: <50 µg/kg; Infant foods: Total amount of AFB: <2 µg/kg, AFB ₁ <0.1 µg/kg, AFM ₁ : <0.025 µg/kg, OTA: <0.5 µg/kg, DON: <150 µg/kg, ZEN: <20 µg/kg
China	Corn, peanuts, and their products: AFB ₁ : < 20 µg/kg, OTA: <5 µg/kg, DON: <1000 µg/kg, ZEN < 60 µg/kg; Other grains, beans, and fermented foods: AFB ₁ : <5 µg/kg; Infant foods: AFB ₁ : 5 µg/kg, AFM ₁ : < 0.5µg/kg; Fresh milk and dairy products: AFM ₁ : < 0.5µg/kg; Rice and vegetable oils (except corn oil and peanut oil): AFB ₁ : <10 µg/kg.
Japan	Peanuts and their products: AFB ₁ : <10 µg/kg; Wheat: DON: <1100 µg/kg; Apple juice: Patulin: <50 µg/kg.

2. Nanoscale Materials for Instrumental Analysis of Mycotoxins

Currently, instrumental analysis techniques based on chromatographic separation, mass spectrometry, or spectroscopy remain the primary strategies for accurately detecting mycotoxins in food, widely accepted as food security. Relationship between global megatrends and developments in food safety: Trends in Food Sci. Technol. 2017, 68, 160–175. [17][18][19]. Large-scale analytical instruments, typically equipped with sensitive detectors and data analysis modules, can successfully detect trace levels of toxin targets.

2. Fu, Y.H.; Yin, S.T.; Zhao, C.; Fan, L.H.; Hu, H.B. Combined toxicity of food-borne mycotoxins and heavy metals or pesticides. Toxicon 2022, 217, 148–154. [20][21]. However, various mycotoxins may coexist at extremely low concentrations in food, and considering the complexity of food matrices, it is necessary to purify the mycotoxins. Do we know enough? Fungal Biol. Rev. 2017, 31, 143–154.

3. Medina, A.; Akhtar, A.; Beezeem, A.; Rodriguez, A.; Mogan, N. Climate change, food security and mycotoxins: Do we know enough? Fungal Biol. Rev. 2017, 31, 143–154.

4. Sharma, V.; Patial, V. Food mycotoxins: Dietary interventions implicated in the prevention of mycotoxicosis. ACS Food Sci. Technol. 2021, 1, 1719–1739.

5. Hague, A.; Wang, Y.H.; Shen, Z.Q.; Li, X.H.; Saleemi, M.K.; He, C. Mycotoxin contamination and control strategy in human, domestic animal and poultry: A review. Microb. Pathog. 2020, 142, 104095. [23][24][25]. **Table 2** illustrates the application of various nanoscale materials in solid-phase extraction (SPE) and solid-phase microextraction (SPME) processes for the detection of mycotoxins in food.

Table 2. Application of various nanoscale materials in SPE and SPME processes for the detection of mycotoxin in food.

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Materials/Methods	Mycotoxins	Substrates	Properties of Materials	Results	Ref.
SPE					
PDA-IL-NFsM SPE coupled with	AFB ₁ , AFB ₂ , AFG ₁ , AFG ₂ ,	Corn, wheat	Various interception mechanisms with the target	Linear range: 1.0–	[26]

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Materials/Methods	Mycotoxins	Substrates	Properties of Materials	Results	Ref.
UPLC-MS/MS	ST, FB ₁ , FB ₂ , OTA, ZEN, HT-2, T-2, DON, 3-AcDON, NIV, 15-AcDON		through hydrogen bonding, π - π interaction, and electrostatic or hydrophobic interaction; good simultaneous adsorption performance; significantly reducing the matrix effect	2000 μ g/kg; LOD: 0.04–4.21 μ g/kg; LOQ: 0.13–14.03 μ g/kg; Recovery: 80.79–112.37 % (RSD: 2.91–14.82 %, n = 4)	[26]
Fe ₃ O ₄ @COF Magnetic SPE coupled with UHPLC-MS/MS	AFB ₁ , OTA, ZEN, TEN, ALT, ALS, AME, AOH, TEA	Fruits	Abundant aromatic rings and carbonyl groups in Fe ₃ O ₄ @COF structure; through the strong π - π interaction and hydrogen bond between mycotoxin and Fe to realize effective enrichment of target mycotoxin	Linear range: 0.05–200 μ g/kg; LOD: 0.01–0.50 μ g/kg; LOQ: 0.10–1.00 μ g/kg; Recovery: 74.25–111.75 % (RSD: 2.08–9.01 %, n = 5)	[27]
PDA@Fe ₃ O ₄ -MWCNTs Magnetic SPE coupled with HPLC-FLD	AFB ₁ , AFB ₂ , AFG ₁ , AFG ₂ , OTA, OTB	Edible vegetable oils	Good water solubility and dispersibility; largely eliminating the influence of matrix effect	Linear range: 1–100 μ g/L; LOD: 0.2–0.5 μ g/kg; LOQ: 0.6–1.5 μ g/kg; Recovery: 70.15–89.25 % (RSD: \leq 6.4 %, n = 6)	[28]
rGO/AuNPs SPE coupled with UHPLC-MS/MS	AFB ₁ , AFB ₂ , OTA, ZEA, α -ZOL, β -ZOL, ZAN, α -ZAL, β -ZAL	Milk	Good adsorbability; adding AuNPs increases the distance between graphene layers and minimizes agglomeration	Linear range: 0.02–200 ng/mL; LOD: 0.01–0.07 ng/mL; LOQ: 0.02–0.18 ng/mL; Recovery: 70.1–111.1 % (RSD: 2.0–	[29]

21. Fan, Y.Y.; Liu, F.J.; He, W.Z.; Qin, Q.M.; Hu, D.Q.; Wu, A.B.; Jiang, W.B.; Wang, C. Screening of multi-mycotoxins in fruits by ultra-performance liquid chromatography coupled to ion mobility quadrupole time-of-flight mass spectrometry. *Food Chem.* 2022, 368, 130858.

Materials/Methods	Mycotoxins	Substrates	Properties of Materials	Results	Ref.
MIL-101(Cr)@Fe ₃ O ₄ Magnetic SPE coupled with UHPLC- MS/MS	AFB ₁ , AFB ₂ , AFG ₁ , AFG ₂ , OTA, OTB, T- 2, HT-2, DAS	Maize, wheat, watermelon, and melon	Magnetic separation and adsorption capabilities involving polar or nonpolar forces, hydrogen bonding forces, and π - π conjugation with mycotoxin- rich functional groups	11.1 %, $n = 5$)	dairy kins
				Linear range: 0.2– 100 ng/mL LOD: 0.02– 0.06 μ g/kg; LOQ: 0.08– 0.2 μ g/kg Recovery: 83.5–108.5 % (RSD: 1.6– 10.4 %, $n = 5$)	developed f [30] te for
					ndez, d liquid
Fe ₃ O ₄ @SiO ₂ -NH ₂ Magnetic SPE coupled with ELISA	AFB ₁	Pixian douban	Rapid separation and enrichment under the external magnetic field; strong chemical stability, storage stability, and specificity combined with aptamer	Linear range: 0.5– 2.0 ng/mL; LOD: 0.17 ng/mL; LOQ: 0.48 ng/mL; Recovery: 80.19– 113.92 % (RSD: 2.30– 7.28 %, $n = 3$)	[31] i. Acta TA) nation of
HAS SPE coupled with HPLC-PHRED-FLD	AFB ₁	Vegetable oils	Outstanding adsorption properties due to the large number of functional group hydrogen bonding, hydrophobicity, and π - π interactions; minimizing the pretreatment time and the amounts of organic solvents	Linear range: 0.10– 50 μ g/kg; LOD: 0.03– 0.09 μ g/kg; LOQ: 0.1– 0.3 μ g/kg; Recovery: 66.9–118.4 % (RSD: ≤ 7.2 %, $n = 6$)	[32] dible n. 2021, iced th ultra- of 9
UIO-66-NH ₂ @MIPs SPE coupled with HPLC	AFB ₁ , AFB ₂ , AFG ₁ , AFG ₂	Wheat, rice, corn, soybean	Uniform and stable; the unique pore structure effectively improving the selective adsorption capacity; excellent affinity and selectivity	Linear range: 0.20– 45 μ g/kg; LOD: 0.06– 0.13 μ g/kg; LOQ: 0.24– 0.45 μ g/kg;	[33] uid

Determination of aflatoxin B1 in Pixian Douban based on aptamer magnetic solid-phase extraction. RSC Adv. 2022, 12, 19528–19536.

Materials/Methods	Mycotoxins	Substrates	Properties of Materials	Results	Ref.
				Recovery: 74.3–98.6 % (RSD: 1.0–5.9 %, n = 6)	. Toxins
MWCNT-COOH + C ₁₈ SPE coupled with UPLC-MS/ MS	21 mycotoxins (AFs, OTA, OTB, ZEN, T-2, ZEN et al.)	Corn, wheat	Significantly reducing the matrix effect; high-throughput screening of various targets; greatly improving the detection efficiency	LOQ: 0.5–25 µg/L; Recovery: 75.6–110.3 % (RSD: 0.3–10.7 %, n = 5)	[34] .Q.; Li, 6-NH2 AFB1, oe for
HNTs-HMIPs SPE coupled with HPLC-FD (Figure 1a)	ZEN	Rice corn, red beans, oats, wheat	Hollow imprinted polymer; excellent adsorption due to the loose and porous characteristics	LOD: 0.5 µg/kg; LOQ: 4.17 µg/kg (Oat), 1.8 µg/kg (Wheat); Recovery: 77.13–102.4 % (RSD: ≤ 5.59 %, n = 6)	[35] N.; You, racting i n ient
SPME					enzene) ysis of
AuNPs SPME coupled with UHPLC-MS/MS	PAT	Apple juice, fresh apple, apple baby food, orange juice	Capillary monolithic column directly modified by AuNPs; high specificity and high affinity	Linear range: 8.11–8.11 × 10 ³ pmol/L; LOD: 2.17 pmol/L; Recovery: 85.4–106 % (RSD: 4.1–7.3 %, n = 5)	[36] bent 2023, nance a in work- 68. micro- nin- d
MAA-co-DVB SPME coupled with HPLC	AFB ₁ , ZEN, STEH	Rice	High-strength micro/nanostructure containing a large number of acrylic groups forming hydrogen bonds with groups in the target structure; effectively overcoming the matrix effect	Linear range: 0.01–1.0 mg/kg; LOD: 0.689–2.030 µg/kg; LOQ: 5.36–14.4 µg/kg Recovery: 86.0–102.8 % (RSD: ≤ 4.8 %, n = 4)	[37]

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Materials/Methods	Mycotoxins	Substrates	Properties of Materials	Results	Ref.
Fe ₃ O ₄ @SiO ₂ @Cu/Ni-NH ₂ BDC Dispersive SPME coupled with HPLC-FLD	AFB ₁ , AFB ₂ , AFG ₁ , AFG ₂ [41][42][43] [44]	River water, well water, rice	Chemical bonds formed between three components making the adsorbent more stable and magnetic; rapid separation	Linear range: 0.11–79.2 ng/mL; LOD: 0.01–0.04 ng/mL; LOQ: 0.04–0.15 ng/mL; Recovery: 92.0–97.8 % (RSD: 4.1–7.6 %)	[38]
MOF+VB ₃ Dispersive SPME coupled with HPLC-FLD	PAT, OTA, AFB ₁ , AFB ₂ , AFG ₁ , AFG ₂ [45][46]	Fruit juices, milk	Green organic linker; high surface area, high adsorption capacity, and excellent porosity to form a new green adsorbent	Linear range: 42.8–1 × 10 ⁶ ng/L; LOD: 11.3–48.2 ng/L; LOQ: 42.8–161.6 ng/L; Recovery: 64.0–87.0 % (RSD: ≤5 %, n = 3)	[47][48] [39] [40] [32]

based solid-phase extraction for effective pre-concentration of highly toxic metal ions from food hydrophobicity, and π - π interactions, which minimize the pretreatment time and the amounts of organic solvents. It and water samples. Appl. Organomet. Chem. 2018, 32, e4012.

can efficiently and stably adsorb two targets from the lipid matrix and obtain accurate detection results (limits of quantification (LOQs), 0.05–0.30 $\mu\text{g} \cdot \text{kg}^{-1}$; limits of detection (LODs), 0.01–0.09 $\mu\text{g} \cdot \text{kg}^{-1}$). Compared with a single type of SPE material, the composite SPE material composed of multiple nanoscale materials can combine the advantages of various materials in a targeted manner. This not only helps to improve the purification efficiency but also significantly improves the selectivity.

48. Dai, H.; NFs/M, polydopamine and ionic liquid bifunctional nanofiber mat: VNNTs-BMWP, halloysite nanotubes hollow molecularly imprinted polymers: ST-sterigmatocystin, EB-ergosterol, HT-2, HT-2 toxin, T-2, T-2 toxin; NIV, type of SPE material, the composite SPE material composed of multiple nanoscale materials can combine the advantages of various materials in a targeted manner. This not only helps to improve the purification efficiency but also significantly improves the selectivity.

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7.2. Absorbent for SPME

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microsphere-based molecularly imprinted polymer for selective capture of aflatoxin B₁. *ACS-space* **2022**; *14*:18845–18853. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acsspace.2c00214>. and co-workers [39][40] prepared a vitamin-based MOF material using vitamin B₃ as a bin linker and cobalt ions as a metallic center in water, and applied it as a sorbent in a DSPME of patulin and Ochratoxin A (OTA) from fruit juice samples and four aflatoxins (AFB₁, AFB₂, AFG₁, and AFG₂) from soy milk. High extraction efficiencies can be achieved by mixing the precipitated protein supernatant with the sorbent and simply vortexing and centrifuging. This MOF material exhibited an excellent adsorption capacity for the target mycotoxins and can be prepared on a large scale in an environmentally friendly manner. The developed strategy required only a small amount of sorbent and organic solvent during the extraction process, which was one of its significant advantages. Using the microfluidic self-assembly technology, Wang et al. successfully prepared magnetic inverse photonic microspheres with a regular three-dimensional ordered macroporous structure and further utilized the “virtual template” molecular imprinting method to fabricate an MIP with high selectivity [91]. This MIP material, with the advantages of an adjustable pore size, easy modification, and good thermal stability of photonic crystal microspheres, was used as a DSPME adsorbent in combination with HPLC to realize the rapid quantitative analysis of AFB₁.