



Formulation and Nutritional Evaluation of a Chickpea-based Functional Snack Enriched with Inositol for Diabetes Management

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10.18805/ajdfr.DR-2338

ABSTRACT

Background: Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a global health concern, making it necessary to develop functional foods to support blood sugar control. This study formulates and evaluates a chickpea-based functional snack enriched with myo-inositol (MI) and D-chiro-inositol (DCI).

Methods: A systematic approach was employed for formulation, incorporating chickpea flour, MI and DCI. A comprehensive nutritional component analysis was conducted following AOAC Methods. Regulatory considerations, including the 2023 approval of DCI by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), were reviewed to establish the safety and compliance of the formulation. Sensory evaluation measured acceptability, followed by statistical analysis.

Result: The formulated snack indicated a higher protein content (18.5 g/100 g) and fibre (6.2 g/100 g) and significantly improved fibre amount compared to the wheat-based formulation. Formulations enriched with MI and DCI (F2 and F4) demonstrated reduced fat content and enhanced nutritional profiles. Sensory scores indicated high acceptability. Literature analysis supports the role of inositol and chickpea-derived prebiotics in enhancing insulin sensitivity and gut health. Market investigation shows that most diabetic-friendly snacks use artificial sweeteners and polyols, which may offer short-lived glycaemic benefits but pose long-term risks. This study represents a functional snack that addresses critical gaps in diabetes-friendly food products. By utilizing the synergistic benefits of chickpeas and inositol derivatives, the formulation offers a sustainable, nutrient-dense alternative to highly processed diabetic snacks. Future research should explore *in vitro* glycemic response testing for further validation.

Key words: Blood glucose, Chickpea, Functional foods, Glycaemic control, Gut microbiome, Inositol, Prebiotics.

INTRODUCTION

Global and national diabetes burden

A global health crisis, Diabetes mellitus (DM), is affecting more than 537 million adults worldwide. This number will exceed 700 million by 2045 (International Diabetes Federation, 2023). In India alone, 101 million people are diagnosed with diabetes, while an additional 136 million are classified as prediabetic (Unnikrishnan *et al.*, 2023).

Importance of snacking in diabetes management

Snacking habits are an important component in the dietary patterns of people with diabetes, yet research studies show that people struggle to maintain healthy snacking habits. A research study revealed that about 70-80% of people with diabetes who are on insulin therapy tend to snack regularly (Marigliano *et al.*, 2018). Nevertheless, this habit did not appear to improve blood sugar regulation. Multiple obstacles encourage poor snacking habits among diabetic individuals such as a lack of motivation, insufficient knowledge about nutritious dietary alternatives and environmental influences like the easy access to unhealthy snack foods (Alrasheeday *et al.*, 2024; Horowitz *et al.*, 2004; Nasirzadeh *et al.*, 2023). These challenges highlight the need to create snack options that are genuinely suitable for people with diabetes.

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How to cite this article: Chauhan, N., Singh, G. and Singh, R. (2025). Formulation and Nutritional Evaluation of a Chickpea-based Functional Snack Enriched with Inositol for Diabetes Management. *Asian Journal of Dairy and Food Research*. 1-7. doi: 10.18805/ajdfr.DR-2338.

Submitted: 28-04-2025 **Accepted:** 02-08-2025 **Online:** 22-08-2025

Limitations of current commercial diabetic snacks

Despite increasing awareness of the role of diet in diabetes management, commercially available diabetes-friendly snacks mainly focus on adding sugar substitutes rather than improving the overall nutritional profile. Many of these products rely on artificial sweeteners such as polyols, aspartame and sucralose, which provide short-term glycemic benefits. However, long-term studies demonstrate that inclusion of these sweeteners may raise the risk of cardiovascular disease and negatively affect gut microbiota

(Mastrocola *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, the primary focus on sugar replacement fails to consider overall acceptability and functionality. Natural sugar alternatives like stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana*) and monk fruit (*Siraitia grosvenorii*) are popular, but their bitter or metallic flavour makes them less appealing to consumers (Prakash *et al.*, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2021). These findings suggest the need for a different approach to formulate diabetic-friendly snacks that integrate functional, research-backed ingredients without compromising taste and long-term health benefits.

Chickpeas as a functional ingredient

Chickpeas (*Cicer arietinum* L.) serve as an excellent component for a health-boosting snack tailored for individuals with diabetes. This is because they are rich in protein and dietary fiber, have a low glycemic index and contain resistant starch (Haq *et al.*, 2017; Rathore *et al.*, 2021). These properties collectively aid in managing blood sugar levels and promoting overall metabolic well-being (Mudryj *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, they are rich in polyphenols, oligosaccharides and saponins, which exhibit antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties (Kantwa *et al.*, 2024; Cani *et al.*, 2021).

Scientific evidence underscores the benefits of chickpea consumption in diabetes management, including: reduced postprandial blood glucose surges, aiding in glycemic control (Acevedo Martinez *et al.*, 2021; Jenkins *et al.*, 2012); better satiety and appetite regulation, helping prevent overeating (Thomas *et al.*, 2015; McCrory *et al.*, 2010) and positive modulation of gut flora composition, promoting short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) production, which has a crucial role in insulin sensitivity (Rossi *et al.*, 2019; Makki *et al.*, 2018). While chickpeas are widely researched for health benefits, they remain surprisingly underused in the production of diabetic snacks. This offers a promising chance to create new, functional food products using chickpeas.

Myo-inositol and D-chiro-inositol as functional additives

MI and DCI are naturally occurring structural isomers of inositol. These are carbohydrates structurally similar to glucose. They are essential in insulin signaling, functioning as secondary messengers that facilitate glucose metabolism (Facchinetti *et al.*, 2020). MI plays a role in controlling how cells manage water balance, facilitate nerve signals and handle fat processing. DCI is crucial for forming glycogen storage and aiding insulin in increasing glucose absorption (Genazzani *et al.*, 2022). A 40:1 ratio of MI to DCI is considered the most effective formulation, which improves metabolic parameters in diabetes (Giordani *et al.*, 2023).

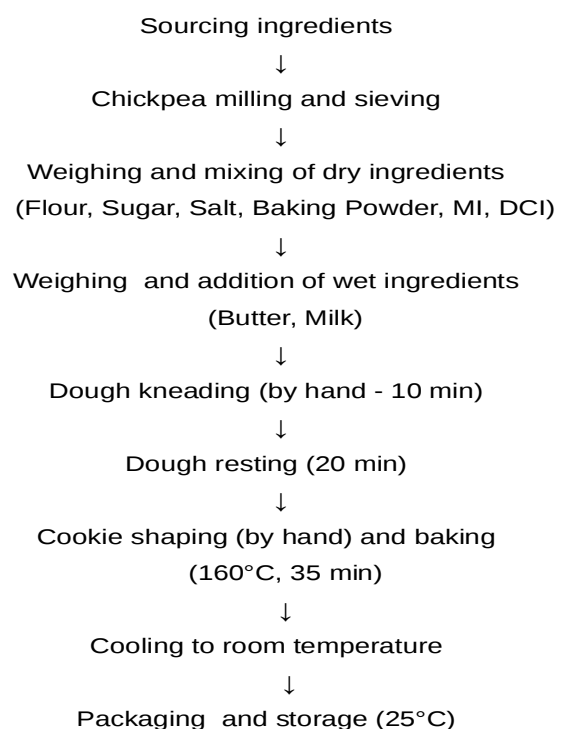
Regulatory authorities have assessed their safety and approved their use in functional foods. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI, 2021) permits MI and DCI in nutraceuticals and functional foods. Similarly, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA, 2009) evaluated inositol and confirmed its safety when used appropriately in food products. In the US, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2023) has granted generally recognized as safe

(GRAS) status to inositol. This study aims to develop nutrient-rich chickpea-based snacks to create diabetes-friendly options that go beyond sugar replacement and enhance overall nutritional value.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the development of snack cookies, different shapes were explored and prepared in the Food Technology Laboratory at GD Goenka University, Gurugram, India (Fig 1 and 5). We followed a standardised process in line with FSSAI regulations and ensured precision in measuring, mixing and baking the ingredients. The whole chickpeas were cleaned and milled into a fine flour using a hammer mill and sieve shaker to ensure uniform particle size. MI and DCI were precisely measured using a digital analytical balance (accuracy ± 0.001 g).

The cookie preparation followed a stepwise dry and wet ingredient mixing, ensuring uniformity and consistency. A mixture of dry ingredients, such as wheat or chickpea flour, sugar, baking powder, MI, DCI and salt, was thoroughly blended using a planetary mixer for five minutes. Gradually, wet components like butter and milk were incorporated into the dry mixture while continuously stirring. The dough was kneaded by hand for about ten minutes at around 25°C. After kneading, the dough was rested for twenty minutes to ensure even moisture distribution. The dough was shaped into cookies and bars manually, placed on baking trays and baked in a convection oven preheated to 160°C for 35 minutes. Once baked, the cookies were cooled to room temperature, packed in food-grade containers and stored



Flow chart 1: Cookie formulation process.

in a controlled environment for subsequent testing (Flow Chart 1).

A sensory evaluation was carried out in 2024-2025 to assess consumer acceptability. Twenty panellists (aged 28-45 years) from GD Goenka University participated. A 9-point hedonic scale, ranging from 1 (dislike extremely) to 9 (like extremely), has been utilised to assess qualities of appearance, texture, flavour, aroma and overall acceptability. The samples were presented randomly under hygienic conditions and accompanied by water for palate cleansing. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the evaluation.

The response data were analysed with SPSS software—results expressed as the mean plus or minus the standard deviation (SD). To identify meaningful differences between groups, one-way ANOVA was performed, followed by Duncan's multiple range test, considering a p-value of less than 0.05 as statistically significant.

The nutritional composition of the ready-to-eat snacks was evaluated using standard proximate analysis techniques by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) guidelines (FSSAI, 2015). Moisture content was measured using oven-drying method (FSSAI Manual for Cereal and Cereal Products, Method No. 14.3, Page 39). Protein content was estimated by the Kjeldahl method (FSSAI Manual for Cereal and Cereal Products, Method No. 8.7, Page 19). Fat content was measured by solvent extraction using the Soxhlet method according to the Bureau of Indian Standards (IS 4684, 1968). Ash content was evaluated through dry ashing at 550°C (FSSAI Manual for Cereal and Cereal Products, Method No. 8.2, Page 14). Carbohydrate content was calculated by difference, using the standard proximate equation:

$$\text{Carbohydrates (\%)} = 100 - (\text{Moisture} + \text{Protein} + \text{Fat} + \text{Ash})$$

Dietary fibre was estimated using the enzymatic-gravimetric method described in the FSSAI Manual for Dietary Fibre Analysis (FSSAI, 2015).

High-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) with a refractive index detector was used to quantify myo-inositol and D-chiro-inositol content in each formulation (Pintaudi *et al.*, 2016). Derivatization was performed for improved peak identification. The optimized HPLC

protocol ensured precise quantification with a detection limit of 0.01 mg/g.

Four cookie formulations were developed: F1-wheat flour snack (control, traditional refined flour; Fig 1); F2-wheat flour + inositol snack (enriched with MI and DCI for metabolic benefits; Fig 2); F3- chickpea flour (70%) + wheat flour (30%) snack (higher protein and fibre; Fig 3); and F4-chickpea flour (70%) + wheat flour (30%) + inositol snack (MI and DCI enrichment; Fig 4).



Fig 2: Wheat flour cookies with MI and DCI (F2).



Fig 3: Chickpea + Wheat flour cookies (F3).



Fig 1: Wheat flour cookies (F1: Control).



Fig 4: Chickpea wheat flour cookies with MI and DCI (F4).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 represents the proximate nutrient composition of the developed cookie formulations (F1-F4) expressed as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) per 100 g of product. The results indicated that the inclusion of chickpea flour and the enrichment with Myo-inositol (MI) and D-chiro-inositol (DCI) significantly influenced the nutritional profile.

The proximate composition of the developed chickpea-based functional cookies revealed slight variations in moisture, ash and fiber content. In contrast, notable differences were observed in fat, protein, carbohydrate and inositol content across different formulations (Table 1). The inclusion of Myo-inositol (MI) and D-chiro-inositol (DCI) played a critical role in modifying the nutritional profile, mainly in F2 and F4 formulations, which were enriched with these bioactive compounds.

Fat content

The fat content ranged from 28.19% to 35.4%, with the highest value recorded in F3 (35.4%), followed by F4 (34.96%), F1 (31.25%) and the lowest in F2 (28.19%). Notably, the inositol-enriched formulations (F2 and F4) contained less fat than their non-enriched counterparts (F1 and F3). This fat reduction might be caused by the binding properties of inositol. The increased fiber content could contribute to a lower fat retention capacity during baking. Similar patterns have been noted in studies on functional

biscuits, where enrichment with bioactive ingredients resulted in a slight reduction in fat content while maintaining acceptable texture (Kulthe *et al.*, 2018).

Protein content

The protein content varied between 9.40% and 11.35%, with F3 exhibiting the highest value (11.35%) and F2 the lowest (9.40%). Chickpeas, as a base ingredient, contributed to the moderate protein content, making them a suitable alternative for plant-based protein sources. The minimal reduction in protein levels in inositol-enriched formulations (F2 and F4) may be attributable to the dilution effect of adding MI and DCI. A comparable reduction in protein content was seen in millet-based biscuits enriched with functional ingredients (Rathi *et al.*, 2004).

Moisture and ash content

Moisture content remained the same across formulations, ranging between 2.21% and 3.14%, confirming adequate shelf stability. The highest moisture was recorded in F3 (3.14%), while the lowest was recorded in F1 and F2 (2.21%). Ash content, which indicates the total mineral composition, varied from 1.37% to 2.23%, with the highest content in F4 (2.23%). These results suggest a higher mineral contribution from inositol-enriched formulations. Similar patterns have been noticed in studies on millet and lentil-based biscuits, where fortification with functional ingredients increased the mineral content (Florence *et al.*, 2014).

Carbohydrate and fiber content

Carbohydrate content ranged from 47.99% to 58.83%. Higher values in F1 and F2 because of their relatively lower protein and fiber content. Fiber content was notably higher in F3 and F4 (6%) compared to F1 and F2 (3.5%). The increase in fibre content in F3 and F4 aligns with findings from studies on legume biscuits, where higher fibre levels contributed to improved glycaemia control and functional benefits (Rebello *et al.*, 2020).

Inositol content

A key distinguishing feature in the inositol-enriched formulations was the significantly higher inositol content. F2 and F4 showed 3980 mg/100 g and 3670 mg/100 g of inositol, respectively, compared to 120 mg/100 g in the control (F1) and 1750 mg/100 g (F3).



Fig 5: Shape Variation (bar and round shape).

Table 1: Proximate nutritional composition of developed cookies (Mean $\pm$ SD, n = 3, per 100/ g). Inositol content reported in mg/100 g.

Parameter	F1	F2	F3	F4
Fat (%)	31.25 $\pm$ 0.40 ^a	28.19 $\pm$ 0.30 ^b	35.40 $\pm$ 0.45 ^c	34.96 $\pm$ 0.35 ^c
Protein (%)	9.94 $\pm$ 0.25 ^a	9.40 $\pm$ 0.20 ^a	11.35 $\pm$ 0.30 ^b	11.05 $\pm$ 0.28 ^b
Moisture (%)	2.21 $\pm$ 0.02 ^a	2.21 $\pm$ 0.03 ^a	3.14 $\pm$ 0.04 ^b	2.49 $\pm$ 0.03 ^{ab}
Ash (%)	1.44 $\pm$ 0.01 ^a	1.37 $\pm$ 0.01 ^a	2.12 $\pm$ 0.02 ^b	2.23 $\pm$ 0.02 ^b
Carbohydrates (%)	55.16 $\pm$ 0.50 ^a	58.83 $\pm$ 0.45 ^b	47.99 $\pm$ 0.60 ^c	49.27 $\pm$ 0.55 ^c
Fiber (%)	3.50 $\pm$ 0.05 ^a	3.50 $\pm$ 0.05 ^a	6.00 $\pm$ 0.06 ^b	6.00 $\pm$ 0.06 ^b
Inositol mg/100 g	120 $\pm$ 5 ^a	3980 $\pm$ 12 ^b	1750 $\pm$ 8 ^c	3670 $\pm$ 10 ^b

¹Values are mean $\pm$ standard deviation (n = 3). Means in a row with different superscripts differ significantly at p<0.05 (Duncan's multiple range test).

Table 2: Sensory evaluation scores of developed cookies (Mean $\pm$ SD, n = 20 panellists).

Attribute	F1	F2	F3	F4
Appearance	7.1 $\pm$ 0.5 ^a	7.3 $\pm$ 0.4 ^a	7.8 $\pm$ 0.4 ^b	8.0 $\pm$ 0.5 ^b
Taste	6.9 $\pm$ 0.5 ^a	7.0 $\pm$ 0.4 ^a	7.5 $\pm$ 0.4 ^b	7.8 $\pm$ 0.4 ^b
Texture	7.0 $\pm$ 0.4 ^a	7.2 $\pm$ 0.3 ^a	7.7 $\pm$ 0.3 ^b	7.9 $\pm$ 0.3 ^b
Aroma	6.8 $\pm$ 0.4 ^a	7.0 $\pm$ 0.4 ^a	7.4 $\pm$ 0.5 ^b	7.6 $\pm$ 0.5 ^b
Overall acceptability	7.0 $\pm$ 0.5 ^a	7.1 $\pm$ 0.4 ^a	7.8 $\pm$ 0.5 ^b	8.0 $\pm$ 0.5 ^b

¹Values are mean $\pm$ standard deviation. Means in a row with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < 0.05$ (Duncan's multiple range test).

Table 2 displays the average sensory scores together with their standard deviations for four different cookie formulations (F1-F4). These evaluations were performed by a group of 20 semi-trained panelists using a 9-point hedonic scale. The sensory characteristics rated include appearance, taste, texture, aroma and overall acceptability.

Appearance scores ranged from 7.1 to 8.0. Formulations incorporating chickpea (F3 and F4) achieved notably higher scores, with averages of 7.8 $\pm$ 0.4 and 8.0 $\pm$ 0.5, respectively, compared to wheat-based options (F1 and F2). The improved visual appeal is likely due to the darker hue and slightly coarse texture contributed by chickpea flour, which is consistent with findings from other studies of bakery products enriched with legumes.

The taste scores ranged from 6.9 to 7.8 across the samples. Formulations based on chickpeas consistently achieved higher ratings, with F3 (7.5 $\pm$ 0.4) and F4 (7.8 $\pm$ 0.4) outperforming F1 (6.9 $\pm$ 0.5) and F2 (7.0 $\pm$ 0.4).

Texture scores were notably higher in formulations F3 (7.7 $\pm$ 0.3) and F4 (7.9 $\pm$ 0.3) compared to F1 and F2. The increased fiber and protein levels from chickpea flour likely contributed to a firmer yet enjoyable texture, which was favored by the panelists. These findings align with previous research showing that legume addition can enhance texture and mouthfeel (Florence *et al.*, 2014).

Aroma ratings ranged from 6.8 to 7.6, with chickpea-enhanced cookies consistently outperforming the wheat-based controls. Both F3 and F4 received significantly higher aroma scores, potentially due to the toasted, roasted scent characteristic of baked chickpeas.

Regarding overall acceptability, F4 (8.0 $\pm$ 0.5) and F3 (7.8 $\pm$ 0.5) scored the highest, suggesting that consumers favoured chickpea-enriched cookies, particularly those including inositol. The wheat-only variants, F1 and F2, received slightly lower scores of 7.0 $\pm$ 0.5 and 7.1 $\pm$ 0.4, respectively.

This study demonstrates that the incorporation of chickpea flour, along with enrichment using Myo-inositol (MI) and D-chiro-inositol (DCI), can notably improve nutritional profile of traditional cookies without compromising consumer acceptability. Analysis of the proximate composition indicated that formulations containing chickpea (F3 and F4) exhibited a higher amount of protein and fibre in comparison to the wheat-based control (F1). These findings aligned with prior research indicating that legume flours such as chickpea, lentil and soybean significantly elevate

the protein and fibre content in bakery products (Rebello *et al.*, 2014; Kaur and Singh, 2005; Srivastava *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, increased dietary fibre from legume-based snacks has been reported to slow starch digestion, reduce glycemic responses and promote sustained energy release (Rebello *et al.*, 2020; Papanikolaou and Fulgoni, 2008).

The observed slight decrease in fat content in inositol-fortified cookies (F2 and F4) relative to their non-fortified versions may result from interactions between inositol, dietary fibre and fat molecules during the baking process. Similar effects have been reported in research where enhancements with soluble fibres, resistant starch, or prebiotics influenced lipid retention and texture in food products (Gómez *et al.*, 2008; Shukla and Srivastava, 2014).

The sensory assessment revealed that cookies made with chickpea flour were highly deemed acceptable by panelists across parameters such as appearance, taste, texture, aroma and overall quality. This aligns with previous studies indicating that chickpea flour contributes appealing nutty flavors and enhances crumb structure in baked goods (Siddiq *et al.*, 2010; Butt *et al.*, 2004). Crucially, the inclusion of MI and DCI did not adversely impact sensory qualities. Similar results have been documented where the incorporation of functional bioactive compounds like omega-3 fatty acids, plant sterols, or inositols into bakery items was achieved successfully without reducing consumer acceptance (Kulthe *et al.*, 2018; Pintaudi *et al.*, 2016; EFSA, 2010).

This study provides preliminary evidence that cookies made from chickpeas and enriched with myo-inositol (MI) and D-chiro-inositol (DCI) can be a tasty and nutritious snack option.

CONCLUSION

- A functional cookie formulation was created utilizing chickpea flour enriched with Myo-inositol and D-chiro-inositol, resulting in enhanced protein and fiber levels while preserving a balanced composition of fats and carbohydrates.
- Sensory and composition analyses indicate it could be a natural, diabetic-friendly alternative to traditional snacks.
- Further research should assess glycemic response, effects on gut health, and shelf-life stability to confirm health benefits.
- These cookies show potential as a sustainable, evidence-based dietary choice for managing diabetes and supporting overall metabolic health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge GD Goenka University for providing laboratory facilities and technical support for this research.

Ethical statement

All sensory evaluations involving human subjects were conducted in compliance with institutional ethical guidelines and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Disclaimer

The findings and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the affiliated institution.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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