

9

***Oshikundu*: An indigenous fermented beverage**

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INTRODUCTION

Oshikundu is a common beverage in Oshana, Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshikoto and Kavango West and East regions of Namibia. As in many parts of Africa, cereal foods and beverages form part of the daily diet in these regions. Cereal beverages, such as *oshikundu*, undergo fermentation, which is a natural process that has been used for many years as an economical form of food preservation. Fermentation kills harmful microorganisms and prolongs the shelf life of basic foodstuffs; it also enhances the nutritional value and organoleptic quality of them, as it does to their quality and stability.

Oshikundu fermentation is dominated by lactic acid bacteria (LAB). The use of LAB offers many advantages, such as increasing food palatability and improving the quality of foods and beverages. Using starter cultures has led to the large-scale production of fermented cereal beverages in many parts of the world. However, the inconsistency of the organoleptic properties of *oshikundu* remains a challenge in household processing technology. Consumer choice is greatly influenced by the sensory attributes of *oshikundu*, such as its aroma and taste. Furthermore, the brewing technology depends on backslopping of an unknown starter culture, preventing the successful production of it on a large scale. Commercializing the production of *oshikundu* would guarantee the use of local traditional resources, help preserve local culture, create jobs and ultimately help reduce poverty (Mu Ashekele, Embashu, & Cheikhoussef, 2012). In addition, applying biotechnology to the brewing process and improving the quality of starter cultures is very important to which several approaches could then be applied, such as genetic manipulation, biofortification and biocatalysis.