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On the seventy-fifth birthday of Professor Jan Velíšek

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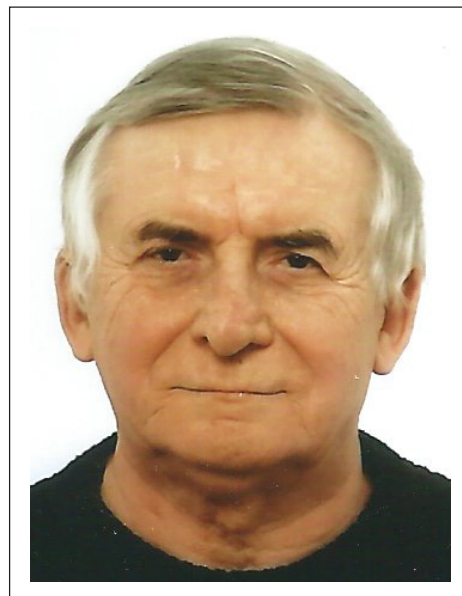
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In view of his unflagging vigour and enthusiasm, it may seem scarcely believable that Prof. Jan Velíšek, MSc, DSc, the former Editor-in-Chief of the Czech Journal of Food Sciences, and one of the highly recognised experts in food chemistry, celebrates his 75th birthday anniversary. On behalf of the editorial board of this journal, I would like to congratulate Prof. Velíšek, commemorate his professional career and recognise his principal scientific achievements in the field of food science.

Born on April 11, 1946 in Trhové Sviny, South Bohemia, Jan Velíšek enrolled at the Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague in 1964 as a student of the Food Preservation and Meat Technology study programme. In 1969, he started his professional career as a research worker at the Department of Food Chemistry and Food Inspection (later Department of Food Chemistry and Analysis, now Department of Food Analysis and Nutrition). Five years later, in 1974, he defended his PhD thesis entitled "Glyoxal in non-enzymatic browning reactions" at his alma mater under the supervision of Prof. Jiří Dáviděk, MSc, DSc. Continuing then as a scientific worker, he started teaching as an Assistant Professor at the same department in 1983. Seven years later, Jan Velíšek was appointed the Associate Professor after habilitation with a thesis on "Study of organic chlorine compounds in protein hydrolysates". In the same year, he also defended his DSc thesis. Since 1992, he worked as the Full Professor of food chemistry and analysis until his retirement in 2013.

Scientific work of Prof. Velíšek is represented by more than 200 publications, both original papers and reviews, and a lot of lectures and scientific projects. His research and publication activities have been focused on the Maillard reaction and other changes of food quality, natural biologically active constituents of food, flavour chemistry, and food contaminants arising during tech-



Prof. Ing. Jan Velíšek, DrSc.

nological processing of foods. Among the range of Prof. Velíšek's scientific achievements in the above fields, there is one issue which deserves a special mention: Prof. Velíšek is a founder of the MCPD story and a pioneer of the research on MCPD and other chloropropanol-derived processing contaminants in hydrolysed vegetable proteins (1978) and many other lipid-containing foods. He made fundamental contributions to the corresponding reaction mechanisms and outlined the possible mitigation procedures of chloropropanols. Based on the work of Prof. Velíšek and his cooperation with Nestlé Germany, Nestlé Research Centre, and Kikkoman Europe, a new technology for the production of food protein hydrolysates has been introduced and measures have been taken to reduce these contaminants in food, in general.

Professor Jan Velíšek is an author, co-author and editor of 16 books and textbooks for students and professionals. If considering only his later period, Prof. Velíšek has become the main author and editor of three editions of Food Chemistry (in Czech, OSSIS 1999, 2002, and 2009), Biosynthesis of Food Compounds (Velíšek J., Cejpek K., OSSIS 2008), and The Chemistry of Food (Velíšek J., John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 2014). After retired and left his routine academic agenda, Prof. Velíšek became entirely focused on his lifelong great love and hobby — food chemistry. This is best evidenced by his work on the recent revised and updated second edition of The Chemistry of Food (Velíšek J., Koplík R., Cejpek K., John Wiley & Sons Ltd 2020).

After 1989, Prof. Velíšek served academia in various positions. From 1991 to 2010 he headed the Department of Chemistry and Food Analysis. Prof. Velíšek also held the positions of the Dean (2000–2006) and the Vice-Dean for Education (2006–2009) at the Faculty of Food and Biochemical Technology. Prof. Velíšek's educational activities were closely connected with the Institute of Chemical Technology (now University of Chemistry and Technology Prague) and comprised lectures on Food Chemistry, Reaction Mechanisms in Food Chemistry, Special Analysis of Food and Multi-dimensional Methods in Statistics. He was a supervisor of many students who have taken numerous important positions in food research and industry in the homeland as well as abroad.

Prof. Velíšek was a member of several scientific associations. He was engaged as a long-term vice-chairman of the Working Group of Food and Agricultural Chemistry, the Czech Chemical Society (till 2010), a national delegate in IUPAC, Commission V1.1 Food Chemistry (1992–1993), a national delegate of the Food Chemistry Division, FECS (Federation of European Chemical Societies; 1998–2010; now EuCheMS), and a member of the International Maillard Reaction Society (IMARS;

2007–2013). He was also active in scientific boards of journals; he served as the Chairman of the editorial board of the Czech Journal of Food Sciences (1998–2015) and a member of the editorial boards of European Food Research and Technology (since 1999) and several other journals. Prof. Velíšek is a member of the Department of Human Nutrition and Food Quality of the Czech Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

As an organiser, Prof. Jan Velíšek together with Prof. Jiří Davídek introduced a Prague tradition of the recognised scientific event "Chemical Reactions in Foods" of the Food Chemistry Division (EuCheMS) that has taken place every fourth year since 1992. He was also a co-organiser of the annual Czech national Symposia on new trends in food production, chemistry and analysis (1970–2010; now CzechFoodChem).

For the above achievements, he was conferred with Votoček Medal of the University of Chemistry and Technology Prague (2009), Balling Medal of the Faculty of Food and Biochemical Technology, UCT Prague (2011), and Memorial Plaque of the Czech Academy of Agricultural Sciences (2021).

Undoubtedly, Prof. Velíšek is an eminent representative of food sciences. However, that is only a part of his impressive personality — I have not mentioned yet his very positive attitude towards fishing, gardening, culinary arts, biology (there are not many people in our discipline who are able to use Latin terminology as naturally as him), nature in general, and life as such.

Fortunately, Professor Velíšek continues to enjoy and pursue his interests in his characteristic calm and purposeful manner, therefore this anniversary does not signify any real cut-off in his activities. On the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, the editorial board and publisher of this journal join his close colleagues and friends in wishing Jan Velíšek good health and many more fulfilled years in life and sciences.

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