

## A Preliminary Study on the Selection of Self-Heating Elements in Self-Heating Pads for Instant Tuna Packaging

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### ABSTRACT

Tuna is one of the travelers' most popular instant foods due to its delicious and nutritious taste. The innovation in food technology has offered a better experience for travelers in enjoying their meals by providing a self-heating pad to reheat the instant food. However, the commercial instant tuna available in the market nowadays offers no option for reheating purposes. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the best combination of materials to be developed as a self-heating pad for reheating that instant tuna. The most suitable characteristic of the combination of materials to be incorporated in a self-heating pad is the highest final temperature, the longest duration sustained at the highest temperature, and the shorter duration to achieve the highest temperature. In this current study, there are four (4) combinations of self-heating elements were evaluated, which are calcium oxide, sodium bicarbonate, and Fe(iron); calcium oxide and zinc; calcium oxide and Fe(iron); calcium oxide, sodium bicarbonate, and zinc. The reaction for each combination was activated with 100 mL and 200 mL of tap water, and the temperature of each reaction was recorded. Based on the theoretical calculation, 50.72°C is the temperature needed to reheat the tuna with 100 mL of water, and 61.30 °C is the temperature needed to reheat the tuna with 200 mL of water. The result of this study indicated that the combination of 40 grams of calcium oxide and 6 grams of zinc in 100 mL water exhibited the highest temperature (76 °C) with the time sustained at the highest temperature is 2 minutes and 13 seconds, and it took about 9 minutes and 20 seconds to achieve the highest temperature. Our study showed a promising finding where the highest temperature obtained by this combination exhibited higher temperature than the theoretically calculated temperature (50.72°C) needed to reheat the tuna. Therefore, considering the overall characteristic, 40 g of Calcium oxide and 6 grams of zinc along with 100 mL was chosen as the best material to be developed further as a self-heating element for reheating instant tuna.

**Keywords:** *Calcium oxide, iron, instant tuna, self-heating element, self-heating pad*

## INTRODUCTION

Self-heating food packaging is active packaging that can heat the food content without external power sources. The self-heating food packaging usually consists of two items: the self-heating pad and the food itself. Commonly, the self-heating pad contains an outer layer surrounding the food, and an exothermic reaction will generate the heat. The exothermic reaction between the materials inside the self-heating pad can be activated by adding a specific amount of liquid, for example, water. Historically, this self-heating food packaging is widely used for military operations, during natural disasters, or whenever any limited sources of conventional cooking tools are unavailable. However, the purpose of self-heating food packaging is widened to recent busy consumers, leisure, during travel which suits current on-the-go lifestyles activities. Self-heating food technology has been explored and developed for over half a century. In the 1950s, research on self-heating food technology led to a satisfactory reaction mixture for heating food components incorporated in the cans, and several million of these cans was used during the war [1]. While in the United Kingdom, it was reported that self-heating could be initiated initially as war expedient and made available for public use, and the products include soups and beverages [2]. Currently, a wide variety of self-heating products are commercially available in the markets, including both food and beverages. A classroom activity also has been implemented by Oliver-Hoya et al. [3] where a self-heating beverage and Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) were used as an example of a real-life chemistry problem, for example, enthalpies of reactions and solutions, stoichiometry, and heat transfers.

Most research finding on the developments of self-heating systems are reported in the form of patents. In the earliest self-heating system development, most inventors used Magnesium-Iron alloy as the heat source. Pickard *et al.* [4] described an exothermic chemical heater in a self-heating group assembly that consists of Magnesium-Iron alloy improved its performance. At the same time, Lamensdorf [5] presented a flameless heater with self-heating technology using a powder mixture of Magnesium-Iron alloy. Various options for heat output are available, but the most reactive reaction is always the most dangerous, potentially toxic, and might produce undesirable gaseous by-products. However, the current trends in food technology offer a better option for consumers where calcium oxide (Quicklime) and water are the most suitable material or elements due to their safety, cheapness, and readily available, and the reaction produces no dangerous side effects towards our environment [6]. Kolb [7] reported an insertable thematic module for self-heating cans. This heater consists of a solid and liquid reactant, calcium oxide, incorporated with a wax-based inhibitor. A chemical mixture of potassium permanganate and calcium oxide activated by liquid reagent, glycerol, and water, is reported to heat the food effectively, safely, and in 10-15 minutes [8].

To date, instant tuna is one of the instant foods popular among people due to its delicious taste and ease of preparing breakfast daily. This is evidenced by Malaysia's percentage of tuna exports, which continues to increase from 2017 to 2019. In fact, most of the instant tuna manufactured nowadays is readily cooked and needs to be kept either in the refrigerator or left at room temperature. However, some people also prefer to eat hot tuna instead of its normal condition. However, the current instant tuna products in the market do not have self-heating-pad for reheating purposes. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the best combination of elements in a heating pad for reheating instant tuna. Implementing this preliminary study can contribute to an insightful knowledge of designing self-heating pads for instant tuna in the future.

## EXPERIMENTAL

### *Determination of Heat and Temperature Needed to Reheat Reheat the Tuna*

Generally, the basic temperature to cook instant get tuna is between 90°C to 92°C [9]. Based on the parameters in Table 1 and assuming no heat loss in the surrounding, the temperature needed to reheat the instant tuna was determined using Equations 1 and 3.

**Table 1:** Parameters of surrounding

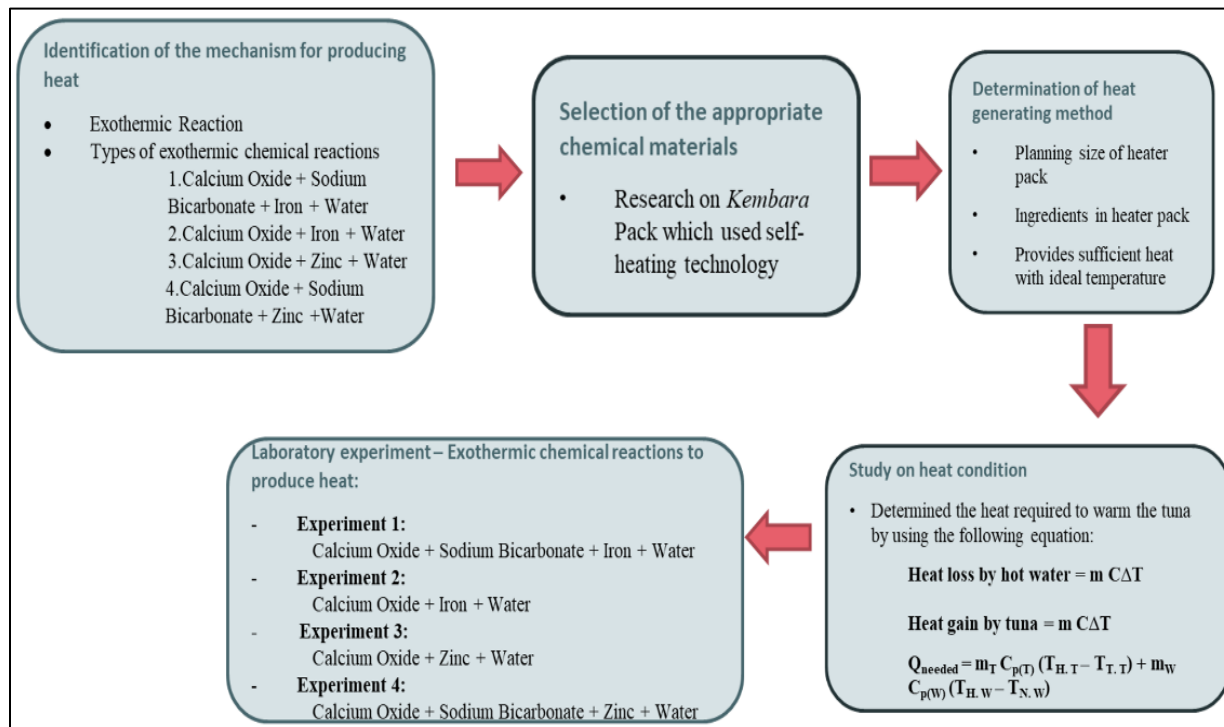
| Parameters                         | Value         |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Weight of water                    | 100 and 200 g |
| Weight of tuna                     | 250 g         |
| Specific heat capacity of tuna     | 3180 J/kgC    |
| Specific heat capacity of water    | 4182 J/kgC    |
| Room temperature                   | 29°C          |
| Boiling water temperature for tuna | 92°C          |

Based on this equation, the needed temperature to produce by heater pack is 50.72°C for 100 ml and 61.30°C for 200ml of water based on the following equations and calculations:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \text{Heat loss by water} = \text{Heat gain by tuna} & \text{Equation 1} \\ \text{Heat loss by hot water} = m C \Delta T & \text{Equation 2} \\ \text{Heat gain by tuna} = m C \Delta T & \text{Equation 3} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Heat loss by water} = \text{Heat gain by tuna} \\ (0.1) (4182) (92C-T) = (0.25) (3180) (T-29C) \\ 418.2 (92-T) = (795) (T-29) \\ T = 50.72^{\circ}\text{C} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Heat loss by water} = \text{Heat gain by tuna} \\ (0.2) (4182) (92C-T) = (0.25) (3180) (T-29C) \\ (836.4) (92-T) = (795) (T-29) \\ T = 61.30^{\circ}\text{C} \end{array}$$



**Figure 1:** Process flowchart of methodologies

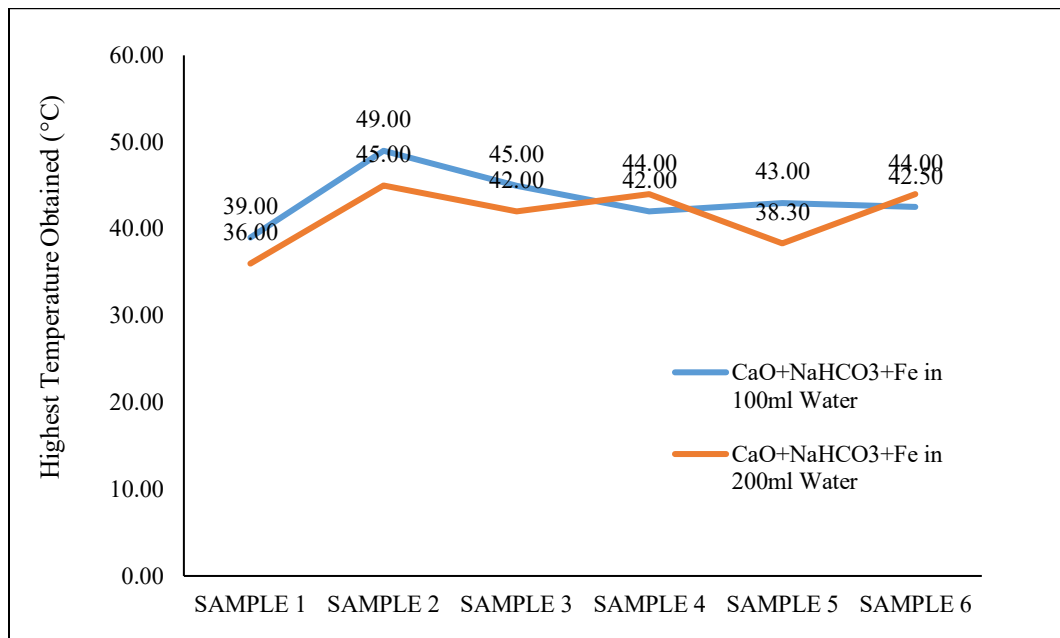
### ***Production of Heat Using Exothermic Chemical Reaction***

An amount of 20g of calcium oxide, 20g of sodium bicarbonate, and 2g of Fe (iron) was weighed using a digital weighing scale. Next, 100 ml of water was measured using a measuring cylinder. Then, all chemical substances were mixed with water in one beaker, and the mixture was stirred using a glass rod until it dissolved. After that, the beaker was covered with aluminum foil, and some tiny holes were poked. The thermometer was placed in the beaker, and the initial temperature was recorded. The highest temperature achieved, the duration taken to rise at the highest temperature, and the duration sustained at the highest temperature was observed and recorded. The experiments were repeated with different amounts of zinc, iron, and water based on the design of the experiment (20 g of CaO+20 g of NaHCO<sub>3</sub> + 4 g of Fe (iron), +100 mL of water). Similar steps were repeated for each sample on each combination of calcium oxide, sodium bicarbonate and zinc, calcium oxide and fe(iron), and calcium oxide and zinc.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Calcium Oxide (CaO) + Sodium Bicarbonate (NaHCO<sub>3</sub>) + Fe (iron) in 100 ml and 200ml of Water

In this research, the combination that showed the highest temperature above the needed theoretical temperature will be selected as a potent self-heating element to be developed further. Figure 2 shows the final temperature obtained for each sample in the combination of calcium oxide, sodium bicarbonate, and iron (fe) in 100 mL and 200 mL of water.



**Figure 2:** Final temperature obtained from the combination of each sample in the combination of CaO+NaHCO<sub>3</sub>+Fe in 100ml and 200ml of water

From Figure 2, this combination shows the final temperature ranging from 36°C to 49 °C. Based on the calculation mentioned in the methodology, the minimum temperature needed to reheat the tuna in 100 mL and 200 mL of water is 50.72 °C and 61.3 °C, respectively. However, this combination's highest temperature (49 °C) is lower than the calculated temperature. Table 1 indicates the information on the temperature difference, duration sustained at the highest temperature, and duration taken to rise at the highest temperature for each combination.

**Table 1: The result for the combination of calcium oxide with sodium bicarbonate and iron in 100 mL and 200 mL of water**

| Run      | CaO (g) | NaHCO <sub>3</sub> (g) | Fe (g) | Water (mL) | Initial temp. (°C) | Final temp. (°C) | Temp. difference (Final temp. - Initial temp.) Δ°C | Duration sustains at the highest temp. (min) | The duration is taken to rise at the highest temp. (min) |
|----------|---------|------------------------|--------|------------|--------------------|------------------|--|--|--|
| SAMPLE 1 | 20      | 20                     | 2      | 100        | 29                 | 39.00            | 18.00  | 4min 28 s                                    | 6min 34s   |
| SAMPLE 2 | 20      | 20                     | 4      | 100        | 29                 | 49.00            | 19.50  | 3min 41s                                     | 5min 24s   |
| SAMPLE 3 | 20      | 20                     | 6      | 100        | 29                 | 45.00            | 14.00  | 2min 21s                                     | 5min 32s   |
| SAMPLE 4 | 20      | 20                     | 8      | 100        | 29                 | 42.00            | 21.00  | 9 min 9s                                     | 6min 3s  |
| SAMPLE 5 | 20      | 20                     | 10     | 100        | 29                 | 43.00            | 20.50  | 8 min 9s                                     | 7min 11s   |
| SAMPLE 6 | 20      | 20                     | 12     | 100        | 29                 | 42.50            | 16.50  | 5min 21s                                     | 13min 5s   |
| SAMPLE 1 | 20      | 20                     | 2      | 200        | 29                 | 36.00            | 17.00  | 1min 45s                                     | 6min 53s   |
| SAMPLE 2 | 20      | 20                     | 4      | 200        | 29                 | 45.00            | 17.00  | 2min 12s                                     | 1min 44s   |
| SAMPLE 3 | 20      | 20                     | 6      | 200        | 29                 | 42.00            | 17.00  | 1min 52s                                     | 4min 41s   |
| SAMPLE 4 | 20      | 20                     | 8      | 200        | 29                 | 44.00            | 18.50  | 1min 51s                                     | 3min 48s   |
| SAMPLE 5 | 20      | 20                     | 10     | 200        | 29                 | 38.30            | 18.00  | 9min 55s                                     | 10min 27s  |
| SAMPLE 6 | 20      | 20                     | 12     | 200        | 29                 | 44.00            | 19.80  | 2min 13s                                     | 3min 53s   |

Based on the research on the commercial *Kembara* self-heating pad, the recommended duration sustained at the highest temperature is approximately 7-10 minutes, and it should only take 1 to 2 min to rise to the highest temperature. From Table 1, the highest final temperature (49 °C) was exhibited by the combination of 20 g CaO along with 20 g of NaHCO<sub>3</sub> and 4g of iron (fe) activated by 100 mL of water, which took about 5 minutes and 24 sec to rise at this highest temperature and sustained for 3 minutes and 41 sec. Overall, taking into consideration the whole characteristics of lower final temperature obtained, long duration taken to rise at the highest temperature, and short duration sustained at the highest temperature, this combination (Equation 4) did not show any potential to be further developed as self-heating elements for the self-heating pad to reheat the instant tuna.

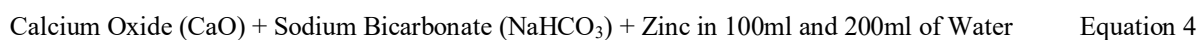
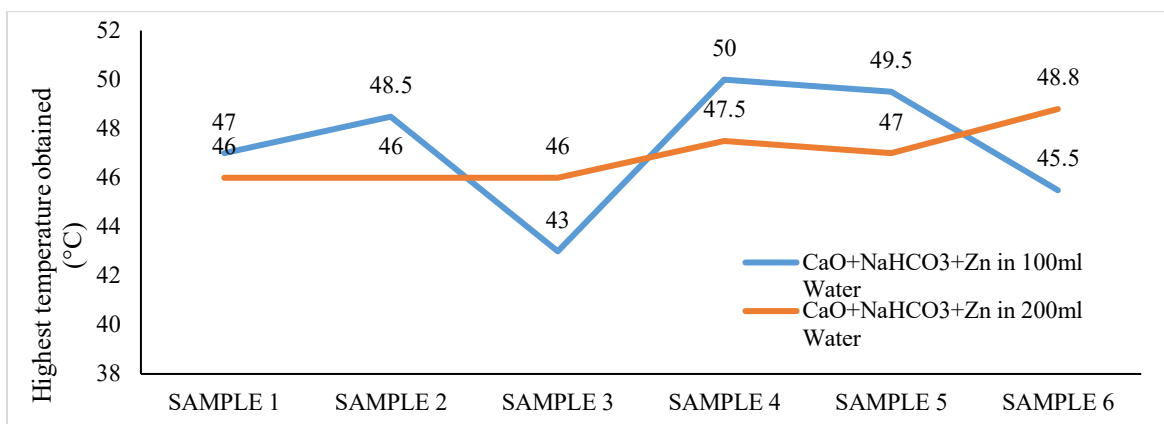


Figure 3 exhibits the obtained final temperature for each sample in the combination of calcium oxide, sodium bicarbonate, and zinc in 100ml and 200ml of water.



**Figure 3:** The obtained highest temperature in the combination of CaO+NaHCO<sub>3</sub> + Zn in 100ml and 200ml of water

From Figure 3, this combination shows the final temperature ranging from 43°C to 50°C. From Table 2, the highest final temperature (50 °C) was exhibited by the combination of 20g CaO along with 20g of NaHCO<sub>3</sub> and 8g of zinc activated by 100 ml of water, and it could sustain for 3 minutes and 41 seconds. This combination showed a similar pattern to the previous combination of CaO, NaHCO<sub>3</sub>, and fe (iron), where the highest final temperature is lower than the needed temperature to reheat the instant tuna, and other characteristics (Table 2) also did not show promising findings to be further developed as self-heating elements in the self-heating pad.

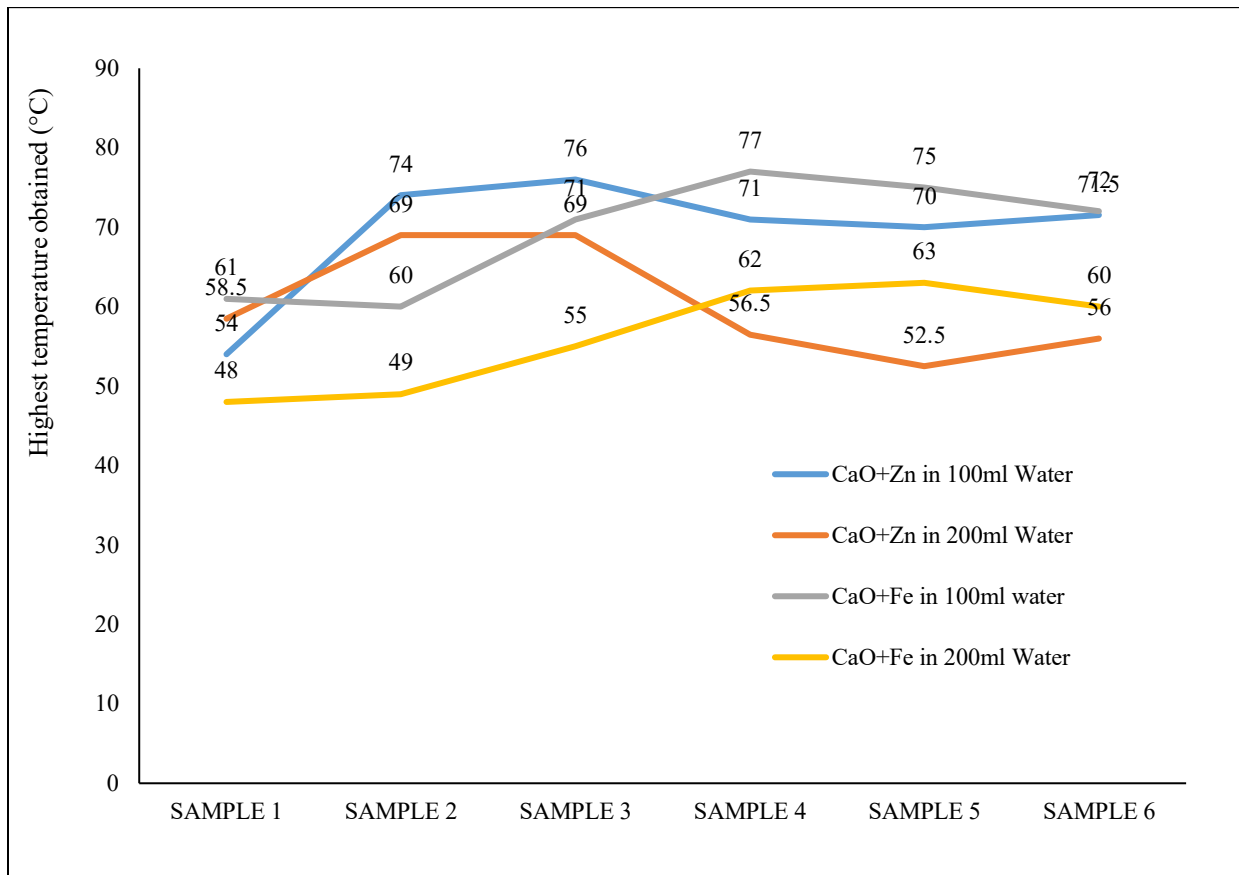
**Table 2:** Result for the combination of calcium oxide, sodium bicarbonate, and iron (fe) in 100 mL and 200 mL of water

| Run      | CaO (g) | NaHCO <sub>3</sub> (g) | Zn (g) | Water (mL) | Initial temp. (°C) | Final temp. (°C) | Temp. difference (Final temp. - Initial temp.) Δ°C | Duration sustains at the highest temp. (min) |
|----------|---------|------------------------|--------|------------|--------------------|------------------|--|--|
| SAMPLE 1 | 20      | 20                     | 2      | 100        | 29                 | 47               | 18   | 3 mins 30 s                                  |
| SAMPLE 2 | 20      | 20                     | 4      | 100        | 29                 | 48.5             | 19.5   | 5 mins 43 s                                  |
| SAMPLE 3 | 20      | 20                     | 6      | 100        | 29                 | 43               | 14   | 4 mins 36 s                                  |
| SAMPLE 4 | 20      | 20                     | 8      | 100        | 29                 | 50               | 21   | 3 mins 8 s                                   |
| SAMPLE 5 | 20      | 20                     | 10     | 100        | 29                 | 49.5             | 20.5   | 4 mins 56 s                                  |
| SAMPLE 6 | 20      | 20                     | 12     | 100        | 29                 | 45.5             | 16.5   | 3 mins 27 s                                  |
| SAMPLE 1 | 20      | 20                     | 2      | 200        | 29                 | 46               | 17   | 1 min 48 s                                   |
| SAMPLE 2 | 20      | 20                     | 4      | 200        | 29                 | 46               | 17   | 1 min 57 s                                   |
| SAMPLE 3 | 20      | 20                     | 6      | 200        | 29                 | 46               | 17   | 2 mins 22 s                                  |
| SAMPLE 4 | 20      | 20                     | 8      | 200        | 29                 | 47.5             | 18.5   | 2 mins 22 s                                  |
| SAMPLE 5 | 20      | 20                     | 10     | 200        | 29                 | 47               | 18   | 2 mins                                       |
| SAMPLE 6 | 20      | 20                     | 12     | 200        | 29                 | 48.8             | 19.8   | 2 mins 39 s                                  |



Figure 4 shows the obtained final temperature for each sample in the combination of calcium oxide and iron (fe) and calcium oxide and zinc in 100 mL and 200 mL of water. The combination can be summarised as in Equation 5.

Calcium Oxide (CaO) + Iron (Fe) and Calcium Oxide + Zinc in 100 mL and 200 mL of Water Equation 5



**Figure 4:** The obtained highest temperature from the combination of CaO+ Zn and CaO+ Fe in 100 mL and 200 mL of water

From Figure 4, the temperature obtained from these combinations ranges from 48 °C and 77 °C. The highest temperature obtained from the combination of CaO+fe is 77 °C, exhibited by sample 4, where 40 g of CaO was mixed with 8 g of Fe (iron) and was activated by 100 mL of water. While for a combination of CaO+Zinc, the highest temperature of 76 °C was shown by sample 3 with 40 g of CaO and 6 g of zinc, and the exothermic reaction was activated by adding 100 mL of water. This combination of CaO with zinc and fe (iron) has shown a promising finding where several combinations indicate the temperature above the needed calculated temperature to reheat the instant tuna.



From Table 3, the obtained highest temperature was indicated by sample 4 with the final temperature of 77 °C; the duration sustained at the highest temperature is 2 min, and it took about 11 min and 50 sec to achieve the final temperature.

**Table 3:** Result for the combination of calcium oxide and iron (fe) in 100 mL and 200 mL of water

| Run      | CaO (g) | Fe (g) | Water (mL) | Initial temp. (°C) | Final temp. (°C) | Temp. difference (Final temp. - Initial temp.) Δ°C | Duration sustains at the highest temp. (min) | The duration is taken to rise at the highest temp. (min) |
|----------|---------|--------|------------|--------------------|------------------|--|--|--|
| SAMPLE 1 | 40      | 2      | 100        | 29                 | 61               | 32   | 2min 5s                                      | 12 min 50s   |
| SAMPLE 2 | 40      | 4      | 100        | 29                 | 60               | 31   | 2min 15s                                     | 14 min 24s   |
| SAMPLE 3 | 40      | 6      | 100        | 29                 | 71               | 42   | 1min 24s                                     | 10 min 20s   |
| SAMPLE 4 | 40      | 8      | 100        | 29                 | 77               | 48   | 2min   | 11 min 50s   |
| SAMPLE 5 | 40      | 10     | 100        | 29                 | 75               | 46   | 1min 28s                                     | 12 min 51s   |
| SAMPLE 6 | 40      | 12     | 100        | 29                 | 72               | 43   | 2min   | 12 min   |
| SAMPLE 1 | 40      | 2      | 200        | 29                 | 48               | 19   | 9min 32s                                     | 12 min 44s   |
| SAMPLE 2 | 40      | 4      | 200        | 29                 | 49               | 20   | 10min  | 15 min 35s   |
| SAMPLE 3 | 40      | 6      | 200        | 29                 | 55               | 26   | 6min 12s                                     | 13 min 30s   |
| SAMPLE 4 | 40      | 8      | 200        | 29                 | 62               | 33   | 2min 1s                                      | 6min 10s   |
| SAMPLE 5 | 40      | 10     | 200        | 29                 | 63               | 34   | 2min 8s                                      | 9 min 42s  |
| SAMPLE 6 | 40      | 12     | 200        | 29                 | 60               | 31   | 3min 56s                                     | 12 min 50s   |

Table 4 indicates the highest temperature achieved by sample 3 with the final temperature of 76 °C, which took approximately 9 min and 20 sec at this highest temperature. In contrast, the duration sustained at this temperature was 2 min and 13 sec. Generally, the combination that showed characteristics of the highest temperature along with the shortest duration to achieve the highest temperature and the longest duration sustained at the highest temperature will be selected as a potent combination for a further detailed study on self-heating elements for a self-heating pad. From Tables 3 and 4, sample 3 in Table 4, which consists of 40 g CaO and 6 g of zinc activated by 100 mL of water, was chosen as the best combination for the self-heating element in the self-heating pad to reheat the instant tuna. Even though this combination has shown lower temperature as compared to sample 4 in Table 3 (77 °C) in the combination of CaO and fe(iron), other characteristics of shorter duration to achieve the highest temperature and more prolonged duration sustains the highest temperature were also needed to be considered in the chosen of the best combination.

**Table 4:** Results for the combination of calcium oxide and zinc in 100 mL and 200 mL of water

| Run      | CaO (g) | Zn (g) | Water (mL) | Initial temp. (°C) | Final temp. (°C) | Temp. difference (Final temp. - Initial temp.) Δ°C | Duration sustains at the highest temp. (min) | The duration is taken to rise at the highest temp.(min) |
|----------|---------|--------|------------|--------------------|------------------|--|--|---|
| SAMPLE 1 | 40      | 2      | 100        | 29                 | 54.00            | 25.00  | 5min 05s                                     | 13 min 14s  |
| SAMPLE 2 | 40      | 4      | 100        | 29                 | 74.00            | 45.00  | 1min 43s                                     | 10 min 3s   |
| SAMPLE 3 | 40      | 6      | 100        | 29                 | 76.00            | 47.00  | 2min 13s                                     | 9 min 20s   |
| SAMPLE 4 | 40      | 8      | 100        | 29                 | 71.00            | 42.00  | 2min 19s                                     | 13 min 21s  |
| SAMPLE 5 | 40      | 10     | 100        | 29                 | 70.00            | 41.00  | 1min 55s                                     | 14 min 41s  |
| SAMPLE 6 | 40      | 12     | 100        | 29                 | 71.50            | 42.50  | 1min 35s                                     | 13 min 47s  |
| SAMPLE 1 | 40      | 2      | 200        | 29                 | 58.50            | 29.50  | 4. min 1s                                    | 13 min 28s  |
| SAMPLE 2 | 40      | 4      | 200        | 29                 | 69.00            | 40.00  | 1min 12s                                     | 12 min 17s  |
| SAMPLE 3 | 40      | 6      | 200        | 29                 | 69.00            | 40.00  | 1min 46s                                     | 10 min 16s  |
| SAMPLE 4 | 40      | 8      | 200        | 29                 | 56.50            | 27.50  | 2min 28s                                     | 21 min 14s  |
| SAMPLE 5 | 40      | 10     | 200        | 29                 | 52.50            | 23.50  | 3min 18s                                     | 15 min 45s  |
| SAMPLE 6 | 40      | 12     | 200        | 29                 | 56.00            | 27.00  | 5min 41s                                     | 21 min 39s  |

In this current study, the reaction between calcium oxide and catalyst, which is zinc and Fe(iron), and the addition of water produced an exothermic reaction. In exothermic reactions, the energy was released, and the reaction mixture's temperature also increased. In this principle, the catalysts are designed to lower the activation energy of the reaction, thus leading to the reaction's acceleration and a reduction in the time of the process. An increased amount of catalysts resulted in its higher efficiency [10]. Our finding showed that 6 g of zinc and 8 g of Fe (iron) could reduce the time of the reaction process better (shorter time to rise at the highest temperature) as compared with 12 g of zinc and Fe (iron). Our findings also suggest that the amount of the catalyst does not align with its efficiency, and this finding was supported by previous findings where they found that the catalyst type was more crucial than its amount [11].

## CONCLUSION

Based on this current experiment, there are two combinations of elements (CaO and Fe (iron) and CaO and Zinc) that potentially showed the pattern that is needed temperature to reheat the tuna. The highest temperature for calcium oxide + zinc is 76 °C; meanwhile, the highest temperature for calcium oxide + iron is 77 °C. A few aspects need to be considered to choose the best combination of elements in a self-heating pad for instant tuna. The essential factors are the final temperature (above the needed temperature to reheat tuna), duration sustained at the highest temperature (within 7-10 min), and duration taken to rise at the highest temperature (within 1-2 min). Therefore, taking consideration into overall characteristics, 40 g of calcium oxide and 6 g of zinc along with 100 mL water was chosen as the best combination of material to be developed further as the self-heating elements for reheating instant tuna as it showed 76 °C as highest

temperature and it remained for 2 min and 13 sec and took only 9 min and 20 sec to achieve this final temperature.

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## AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Nur Syukriah Ab Rahman supervised the research progress, wrote, and revised the article. Fatahiya Mohamed Tap, Iswaibah Mustafa, and Aishah Derahman designed the research, conceptualized the central research idea, and provided the theoretical framework. Nur Ellyliana Mohd Razali, Tuan Muhammad Sadiq Zafran, Tuan Zainal Abidin, and Nur Syazwani Abd Rahman carried out the research in the laboratory.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted without any self-benefits or commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

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