

no food dilemma

START
2010
RIGHT

NASI BIRYANI OR NASI LEMAK?
LEARN TO PICK THE LESSER
EVIL AT FOOD CENTRES

BY LI YULING



You don't have to give up char kway teow, mee goreng or other sinful choices at the food court. The trick? Make smarter choices amongst the baddies so you get more nutrients too, says Jaclyn Reutens, dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants. Cap your portions at 400 calories for your main course and 200 calories for a snack, she says. "An average Asian woman with a sedentary nine-to-five lifestyle requires 1,600 calories, 50 grams of fat and not more than 18 grams of saturated fat in her daily diet, so do remember to keep these treats to just once or twice a week."

We asked Jaclyn to cast her verdict among 20 popular local dishes. Here's how they measure up per standard serving.

NASI BIRYANI

(with chicken thigh)

877 calories, 35g total fat, 14.8g sat fat

VS

NASI LEMAK

(with fried chicken wing, ikan bilis and fried egg)

802 calories; 35g total fat; 13.5g sat fat

The expert's take:

This is a tough fight. Both dishes contain rice cooked in fat (coconut milk for lemak and ghee for biryani), and are served with protein foods and minuscule amounts of vegetables. However, you're better off opting for **nasi biryani** as its rice has less calories and saturated fat. Furthermore, biryani is usually cooked with basmati or long-grain rice, which is good for controlling blood sugar levels. Also, chicken wings are higher in fat than chicken thighs.

Calorie-saving tip: Remove the skin on the thigh and eat only half the amount of rice served.

Go for:
NASI BIRYANI
(with chicken thigh)

CURRY CHICKEN NOODLES

809 calories; 52.1g total fat; 25.3g sat fat

VS

LAKSA

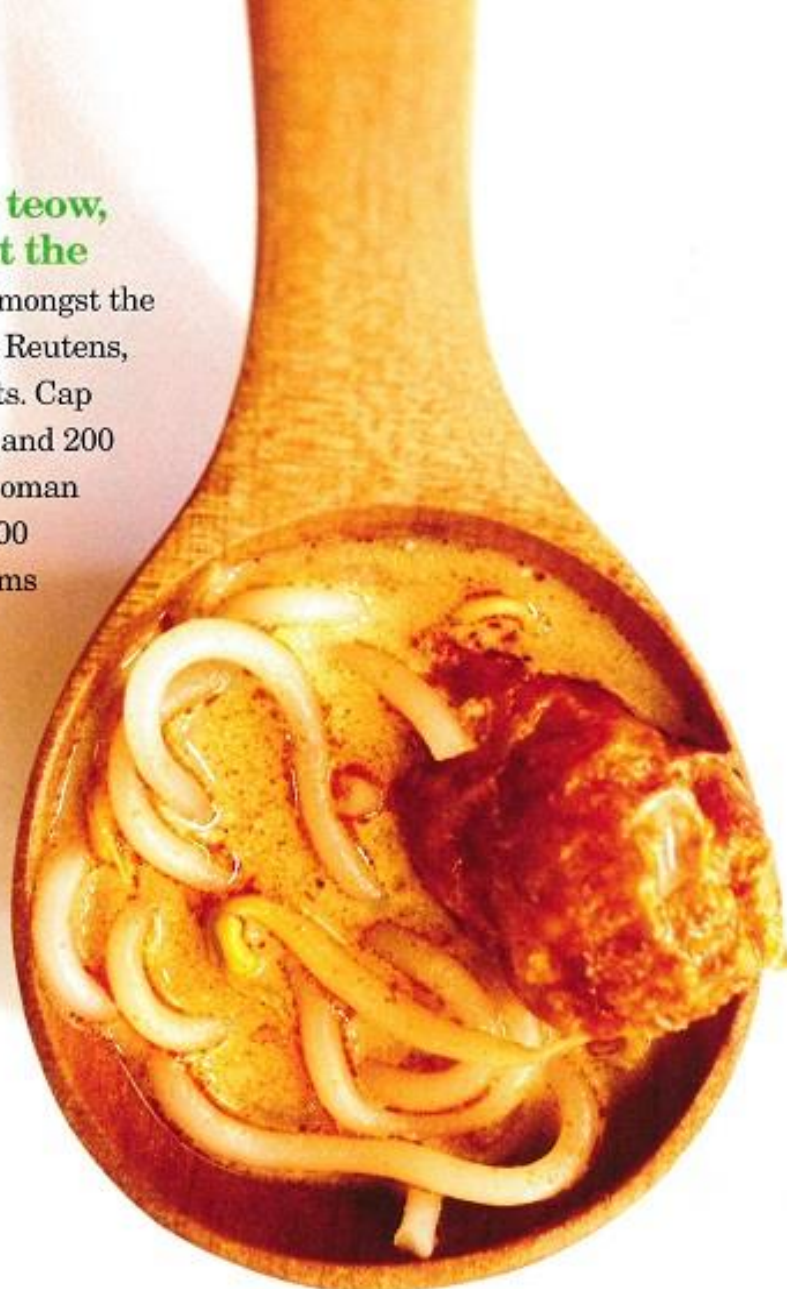
696 calories; 39.7g total fat; 14.2g sat fat

The expert's take:

Laksa is actually more nutritious than chicken curry noodles. Besides being significantly lower in fat, it contains more vitamin A, calcium and iron.

Calorie-saving tip: Drain the taupok of the excess gravy it has soaked up before eating it.

Go for:
LAKSA





ROASTED CHICKEN RICE

688 calories; 26g total fat; 10g sat fat

VS

ROASTED DUCK RICE

693 calories; 20.5g total fat; 6.1g sat fat

The expert's take:

Go for **duck rice**. The rice is much healthier than chicken rice, which is often cooked with a substantial amount of oil.

You can reduce your fat intake further by removing the skin from the duck. Furthermore,

duck is a good source of iron – it has almost thrice the amount of iron in chicken.

Calorie-saving tip:

Ask for less sauce or skip it altogether.

Go for:
**ROASTED
DUCK
RICE**

OYSTER OMELETTE

645 calories; 49.3g total fat;
20g sat fat

VS

CARROT CAKE

(with black sauce and egg)

493 calories; 35.4g total fat;
14.1g sat fat

The expert's take:

Calorie for calorie, the **oyster omelette** offers more benefits as it is rich in nutrients such as vitamin A and iron. Carrot cake is essentially fried starch with some proteins from the eggs.

Calorie-saving tip: Share the oyster omelette with friends to split the caloric load.

Go for:
**OYSTER
OMELETTE**

GRILLED SIRLOIN STEAK

295 calories; 18.6g total fat; 8.5g sat fat

VS

GRILLED LAMB CHOPS

339 calories; 22.1g total fat; 11.3g sat fat

The expert's take:

At 120g per slab, **sirloin steak** is the leaner protein choice. You can also remove the visible strip of fat on it. But with lamb chops, the fat is marbled in the meat.

Calorie-saving tip: Resist the temptation to order a larger cut by asking for more of the salad, baked beans or corn sides.

Go for:
**GRILLED
SIRLOIN
STEAK**

FISHBALL DRY NOODLES

370 calories; 8.2g total fat; 3.3g sat fat

VS

MUSHROOM & MINCED PORK DRY NOODLES

510 calories; 22.7g total fat; 9.2g sat fat

The expert's take:

Although a serving of fishball noodles contains less calories and fat than the **noodles with mushroom and minced pork**, pick the latter for its higher nutritional value. Mushrooms are high in selenium and B-vitamins. Compared to minced pork, fishballs are high in sodium, and often contain fillers, flour, flavoured additives and very little fish meat.

Calorie-saving tip: Ask for more vinegar and less oil, and you won't compromise on the flavour.

Go for:
**MUSHROOM
& MINCED
PORK DRY
NOODLES**



GORENG PISANG

197 calories; 5.3g total fat;
3.4g sat fat

VS

KUEH DADAR

206 calories; 9.3g total fat;
8.2g sat fat

The expert's take:

Opt for the **goreng pisang** as it gives you potassium. One banana fritter has 218mg of the nutrient. Kueh dadar may seem harmless, but it harbours more fat due to the oil, coconut milk and desiccated coconut that are used.

Calorie-saving tip: Pick some of the deep-fried crisps off the thickly battered ones.

Go for:
**GORENG
PISANG**



MEE REBUS

571 calories; 17.1g total fat;
5.8g sat fat

VS

MEE GORENG

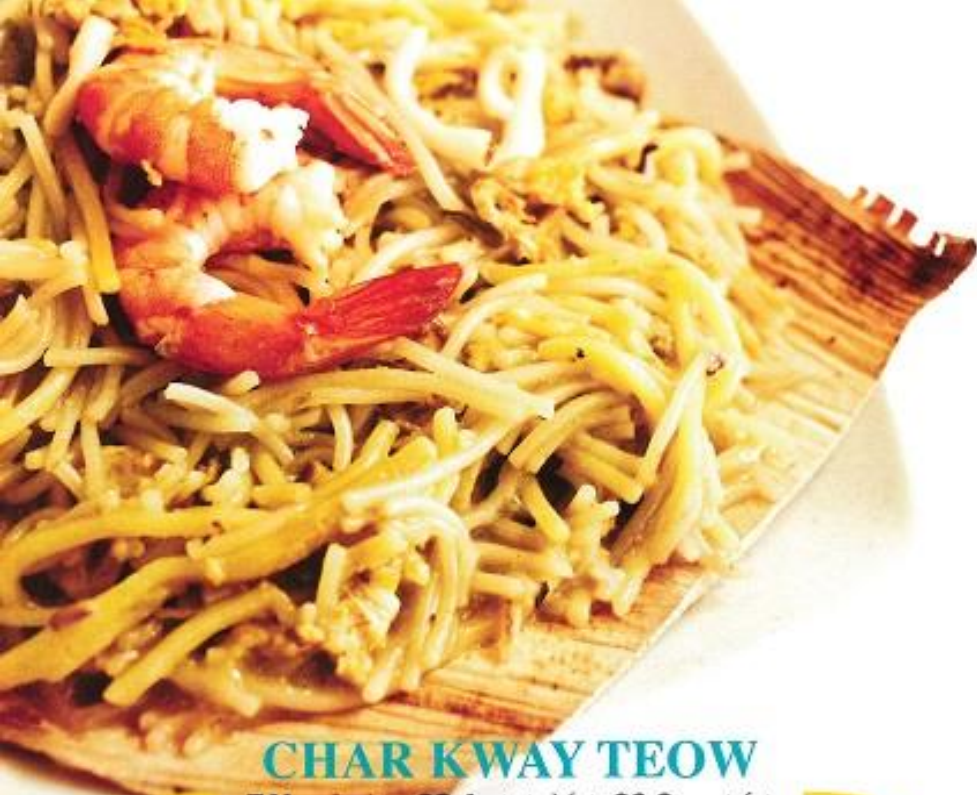
501 calories; 20.4g total fat;
8.3g sat fat

The expert's take:

With vegetables and meat mixed in, **mee goreng** is a more complete meal as it can offer over four times more vitamin A than mee rebus. If you have a choice of meats, opt for seafood as the chicken or mutton used is likely to be poorer cuts of meat. Mutton is also especially high in cholesterol and fat.

Calorie-saving tip: Trade the yellow noodles for bee hoon.

Go for:
**MEE
GORENG**



CHAR KWAY TEOW

741 calories; 38.4g total fat; 29.2g sat fat

VS

HOKKIEN MEE

522 calories; 19.0g total fat; 7.3g sat fat

The expert's take: Hokkien mee is a better choice as you get quality protein from the eggs, prawns and squid. Although cockles are rich in iron, char kway teow is substantially higher in fat, with more than four times the saturated fat of Hokkien mee.

Calorie-saving tip: Skip the lard and squeeze in more lime instead.

Go for:
HOKKIEN MEE

CHENDOL

461 calories; 19.5g total fat;
17.8g sat fat

VS

BUBOH CHA CHA

536 calories; 33.7g total fat;
30.1g sat fat

The expert's take:

Have **chendol**. It's a better choice as it contains red beans, which not only offer extra dietary fibre but some vitamin B too. While both desserts are coconut milk-based, buboh cha cha is a heavier option with carbohydrates in the form of yam, sweet potato and tapioca flour.

Calorie-saving tip: Halve the serving and avoid mixing the palm syrup into the coconut milk so you take in less sugar.

Go for:
CHENDOL

Coffee, tea or less calories?

Don't forget the liquid calories in the beverage you sip at lunch. Every cup adds up!

Drink	Per 250 ml	Drink	Per 250 ml
Kopi (coffee with condensed milk)	145 calories	Bandung	145 calories
Kopi-O (coffee with sugar)	85 calories	Soyabean drink (with sugar)	85 calories
Teh (tea with condensed milk)	134 calories	Soyabean drink (without sugar)	134 calories
Teh-O (tea with sugar)	32 calories	Orange juice (freshly squeezed)	32 calories
Milo	123 calories	Watermelon juice (freshly squeezed)	123 calories