

# These Singapore Hawker Foods Are Not As Unhealthy As You Think!

Chicken rice or duck rice? A dietitian tells us the better options at hawker centres.

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**Hawker food is not all bad. Pick the lesser evil and use these calorie-saving tips! By Li Yuling**

You don't have to swear off all your favourite indulgences at the hawker centre. The trick? Make smarter choices among the baddies so you get more nutrients, says Jaclyn Reutens, dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants. And, cap your portions at 400 calories for the main course and 200 calories for a snack, she says. In other words: Don't finish all of it. For example, if a typical serving of duck rice has 672 calories, eat about two-thirds of it.

"An average Asian woman with a sedentary nine-to-five lifestyle needs about 1,600 calories, 50 grams of fat and less than 18 grams of saturated fat (or sat fat) in her daily diet, so remember to keep these treats to not more than once a week," says Jaclyn. Here she casts her verdict among 10 pairs of popular local dishes, and tells us which ones are healthier.

Get ready for some surprises!

(Note: Analysis is based on standard serving sizes and nutritional data from the Health Promotion Board of Singapore.)



### **ROASTED CHICKEN RICE vs ROASTED DUCK RICE**

605 calories; 22.9g total fat; 8.7g sat fat vs 672 calories; 19.9g total fat; 5.9g sat fat

**Winner:** Duck rice

**The dietitian says:** Duck rice is much healthier than chicken rice, which is often cooked with a substantial amount of oil. You can reduce your fat intake by removing the skin. Duck is a also good source of iron – it has almost thrice the amount of iron in chicken.

**Calorie-saving tip:** Ask for less sauce or skip the sauce altogether.



**NASI BIRYANI (with chicken thigh) vs NASI LEMAK (with fried chicken wing, ikan bilis and fried egg)**

877 calories, 34.8g total fat, 14.8g sat fat vs 657 calories; 24.8g total fat; 10.7g sat fat

**Winner:** Nasi biryani

**The dietitian says:** This is a tough fight between similar dishes. Both 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 the rice is lower in calories and saturated fat. The grains used in this dish (basmati or long-grain) are also better for controlling blood sugar levels. When it comes to chicken, the wings are higher in fat than thighs.

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



### **FISHBALL DRY NOODLES vs MUSHROOM & MINCED PORK DRY NOODLES**

370 calories; 8.2g total fat; 3.3g sat fat vs 510 calories; 22.7g total fat; 9.2g sat fat

**Winner:** Mushroom & minced pork dry noodles

**The dietitian says:** Although a serving of fishball noodles contains fewer calories than the noodles with mushroom and minced pork, pick the latter for its higher nutritional value. Mushrooms are rich in selenium and B vitamins. Fishballs are high in sodium and often contain fillers, flour, flavoured additives and very little fish meat.

**Calorie-saving tip:** Ask for less oil and more vinegar so the flavour won't be compromised.



### **CURRY CHICKEN NOODLES vs LAKSA LEMAK**

695 calories; 44.8g total fat; 21.7g sat fat vs 696 calories; 39.7g total fat; 14.2g sat fat

**Winner:** Laksa

**The dietitian says:** 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 tau pok of excess gravy before eating it.



### **MEE REBUS vs MEE GORENG**

571 calories; 17.1g total fat; 5.8g sat fat vs 501 calories; 20.4g total fat; 8.3g sat fat

**Winner:** Mee goreng

**The dietitian says:** With vegetables and meat mixed in, mee goreng is a more complete meal. It offers more than four times the vitamin A in mee rebus. For meat, choose seafood over chicken or mutton as poorer quality cuts are typically used. Mutton is also especially high in cholesterol and fat.

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





### **CHAR KWAY TEOW vs HOKKIEN MEE**

741 calories; 38.4g total fat; 29.2g sat fat vs 522 calories; 19.0g total fat; 7.3g sat fat

**Winner:** Hokkien mee

**The dietitian says:** Hokkien mee is a better choice as you get quality protein from 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 found in Hokkien mee.

**Calorie-saving tip:** Skip the lard and drizzle with more lime juice instead.



**OYSTER OMELETTE vs CARROT CAKE (with dark sweet sauce and egg)**

645 calories; 49.3g total fat; 20g sat fat vs 493 calories; 35.4g total fat; 14.1g sat fat

**Winner:** Oyster omelette

**The dietitian says:** Calorie for calorie, the oyster omelette offers more benefits as the shellfish is rich in nutrients such as vitamin A and iron. Carrot cake is essentially fried starch with some protein from eggs.

**Calorie-saving tip:** Share the oyster omelette with friends!





### **GRILLED SIRLOIN STEAK vs GRILLED LAMB CHOPS**

263 calories; 12.7g total fat; 4.9g sat fat vs 282 calories; 16.6g total fat; 7.7g sat fat

**Winner:** Sirloin steak

**The dietitian says:** At 120g per slab, sirloin steak is the leaner protein choice. You can also remove the visible strip of fat. Lamb chops, on the other hand, are mostly marbled meat (read: very fatty!).

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



### **Goreng Pisang vs Kueh Dadar**

197 calories; 5.3g total fat; 3.4g sat fat vs 206 calories; 9.3g total fat; 8.2g sat fat

**Winner:** Goreng pisang

**The dietitian says:** Opt for the goreng pisang as it gives you the essential mineral potassium. One banana fritter has 218mg of the nutrient. Kueh dadar may seem harmless, but it harbours more fat from the oil, coconut milk and desiccated coconut used.

**Calorie-saving tip:** Avoid the deep-fried crisps from thickly battered fritters.



### **CHENDOL vs BUBOH CHA CHA**

461 calories; 19.5g total fat; 17.8g sat fat vs 536 calories; 33.7g total fat; 30.1g sat fat

**Winner:** Chendol

**The dietitian says:** Chendol 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 extra carbohydrates in the form of yam, sweet potato and tapioca flour.

**Calorie-saving tip:** Share half with someone. Avoid mixing the palm syrup into the coconut milk so you take in less sugar.

Source: <http://www.shape.com.sg/food/these-singapore-hawker-foods-are-not-unhealthy-you-think>