

**THE GOOD
THE BAD &
THE
SKINNY**

Happy Meal

IT'S GOT CARBOHYDRATES, FIBRE AND PROTEIN. COULD SATAY BE THE ULTIMATE FOOD-COURT POWER LUNCH?

MUSCLE IN

Satay may be a dish to avoid if you're watching your weight, but when taken in moderation, it can be one of the best post-workout options at the hawker centre. According to the Health Promotion Board (HPB), 10 sticks of chicken satay give you an incredible 27g of protein with 5g of fat. Beef and mutton offer similar protein levels but feature higher levels of fat (7g for beef and 12g for mutton). But don't jump on the satay bandwagon just yet, because the oil used to coat the meat could be a major contributor to the caloric count, says Jamie Liow, a nutritionist from the Singapore Heart Foundation. The oil used for satay is usually blended vegetable oil, which has "a high proportion of saturated fat", says Ng Hwa Ling, a dietitian from the Dietetics and Nutrition Services at the Singapore General Hospital.

STUB THE SAUCE

It just isn't satay without the peanut sauce, but try to do without it as much as you can. You'll cut down on 3g of fat and 69mg of sodium per stick, according to the HPB. And if you can avoid dipping in 10 sticks, you'll cut down on a whopping 30g of

fat and 690mg of sodium! Make things easy: Order the dish without the sauce to avoid temptation.

COATED CONCERNS

If you're skewer-savvy enough, you'd have noticed that most kinds of satay are somewhat yellowish in colour. That's because they're often coated with a layer of turmeric. "Curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, may have antioxidants and cancer-preventive properties," says Ng. However, Liow is quick to point out that only about 3 per cent of turmeric contains curcumin. And, of that percentage, very little is absorbed by our bodies. Don't think satay can replace your daily intake of fruit, though, because when you consume enough turmeric to warrant a protective benefit, you may already be exposing yourself to heart disease.

LIGHT BULB

Don't feed those slices of onion in your satay dish to the rubbish bin

because raw onions are a rich source of dietary flavonoids (antioxidants) such as quercetin. These can protect against heart disease, stroke and even reduce the risk of certain cancers (for instance, stomach, colorectal and prostate cancers), says Ng. These particular benefits of onions are strongest when they are raw, she explains, as the oil that contains quercetin evaporates when exposed to heat. Still, one antioxidant alone cannot replace the variety found in fruits and vegetables, says Ng.

