



“Smart” Spring Festival: Learning More about Chinese New Year Food

In Chinese New Year (CNY), we all love to celebrate with our relatives and friends by sharing festival food. Considering that there are so many kinds of festival foods during CNY, how should we choose healthily and eat enjoyably?

Chinese Cakes



Chinese Cakes, with an implication of “getting promotion step by step”, are essential foods in Chinese New Year. New Year cakes, radish cakes, taro cakes, water chestnut cakes are all delicious. Nonetheless, we may easily eat more than enough for they are usually tiny in portion. In fact, the calories of a piece of Chinese New Year cake (approximately 85 grams) are almost equivalent to half a bowl of rice¹. Overeating could cause excessive intake of calories, which would then increase our weight and result in obesity. Therefore, Chinese cakes should only be taken in moderation and as a light snack.

Health Tips:

Besides traditional cakes, we may also consider osmanthus flower tea cake, which is a better alternative with lower calories. However, osmanthus flower tea cake contains added sugar. Overweight and diabetic individuals should pay particular attention to the portion size. On the other hand, if you would like to prepare Chinese cakes on your own, prepare with lean meat, dried shrimps and mushrooms instead of the preserved meat and sausage found in regular radish cakes and taro cakes.

Deep Fried Food



Yau Gok, Sesame Cracker Balls, Sesame Seed Balls are all crunchy and tasty. Their tastiness is irresistible and may cause us to eat non-stop. Nevertheless, deep fried food contains a good amount of fat. Five Sesame Seed Balls contain approximately four teaspoons of oil¹. Excessive intake of fat will raise the bad cholesterol level in our blood, hence increasing the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Health Tips:

If you would like to eat healthier, you might want to choose fresh fruit instead of deep fried food as snacks. Fruit is high in dietary fibre and rich in vitamins, minerals and water. Taking adequate vegetables and fruit every day can help prevent chronic diseases such as heart diseases, colon cancer, obesity, etc².

Sweets



Sweetened lotus seeds, lotus roots, winter melons, chocolates and candies are commonly found festival foods in a Chinese candy box. Since Chinese candy box is usually put in a conspicuous place, we may mindlessly grab and pop in a few pieces of sweets. Unfortunately, overeating of sweets does not only cause excessive intake of calories, but also tooth decay.

Health Tips:

Actually, we may consider placing healthier food, e.g. original flavoured nuts, and dried fruit and seeds without any added sugar, salt, and oil in a Chinese candy box. In order to exercise portion control, we may consider placing small and individually packed food items in a Chinese candy box instead.

To know more about ...

- ✧ healthy eating, please visit 'Health Zone' website at <http://www.cheu.gov.hk>
- ✧ 'Health@work.hk Project', please visit <http://www.healthatwork.gov.hk>

¹ Centre for Food Safety

² World Health Organization