
Survey on Popular Food Items: Southeast Asian Food

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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Background

- Hong Kong is a world-renowned gourmet paradise. A wide range of delicacies from Chinese regional dishes, Western cuisines to Southeast Asian food are all available.
- Of which, Southeast Asian food is popular among consumers. Its safety is an issue of public concern.
- In view of this, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has conducted a survey on popular food items -- “Southeast Asian Food” recently to assess the safety of these food items.

Types of food tested

- 300 food samples of various types were collected for testing from more than 100 food premises.

Type of food	Number of samples	Percentage
Snacks	75	25%
Soups	9	3%
Main dishes	72	24%
Rice and pasta/noodles	48	16%
Desserts	39	13%
Sauces and spices	37	12%
Drinks	20	7%
Total	300	100%

Snacks

- Samples included Thai shrimp and pomelo salad, deep fried fish cake with spicy sauce, Vietnamese shrimp mousse on sugar cane, Thai sweet and spicy jellyfish.



Soups

- Samples included Thai Tom Yum Goong soup, Bak Kut Teh soup, Singaporean sour and spicy soup.



Main dishes

- Samples included Thai steamed mullet on stove tray, fried conch with chili paste, Vietnamese king prawn in sour soup, white curry pork chop and Vietnamese pork chop with lemon grass.



Rice and pasta/noodles

- Samples included fried Pad Thai noodles, Thai baked pineapple rice with seafood, Malaysian fried rice noodles, Vietnamese cold rice noodles with sausages and Vietnamese Pho noodle soup with rare beef.



Desserts

- Samples included glutinous rice with coconut milk and mango, sago pudding with coconut milk and Indonesian pudding.



Sauces and spices

- Samples included satay sauce, basil, lemon grass, fish sauce and Belachan paste.



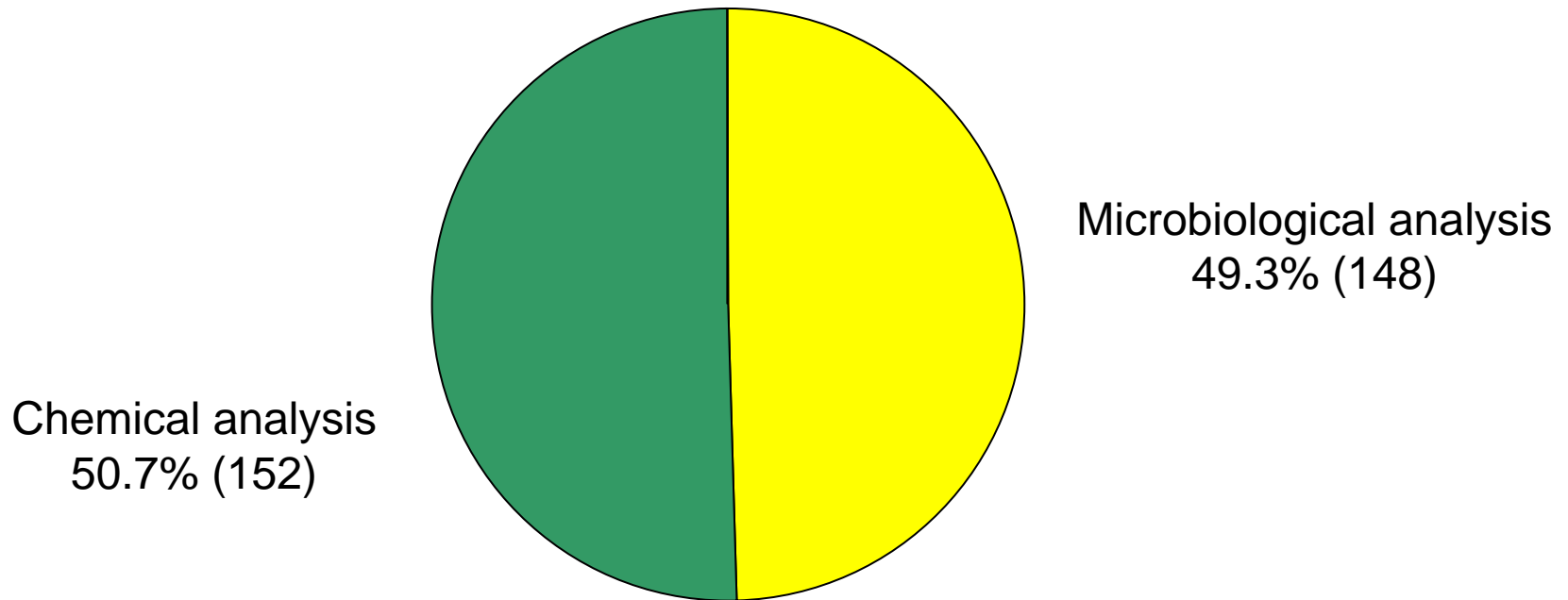
Drinks

- Samples included tri-colour icy drink with coconut milk, cendol icy drink, rambutan icy drink and coconut water.



Types of tests

- Tests covered microbiological and chemical analyses.



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Types of tests (Cont'd)

Microbiological tests

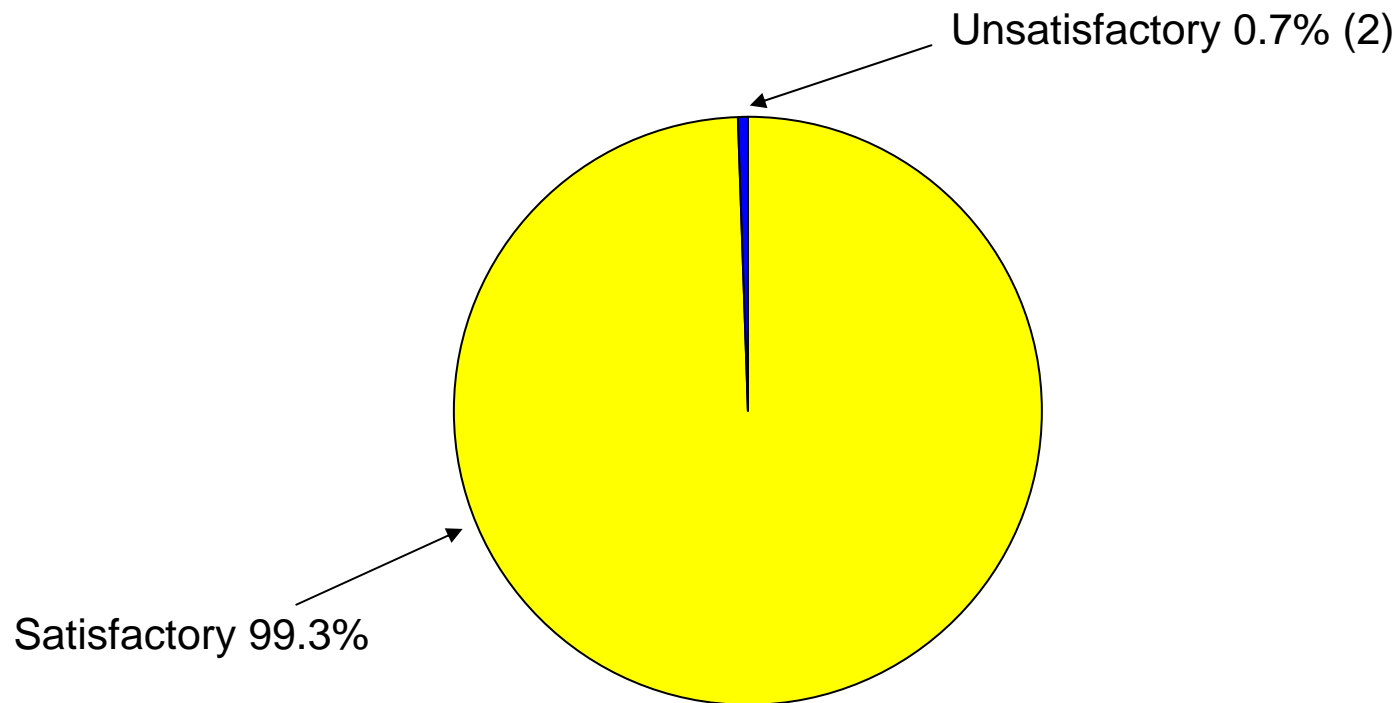
- It included tests of pathogens such as *Bacillus cereus*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Salmonella* and *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Chemical tests

- It covered hazards which are commonly present such as colouring matters, metallic contamination, preservatives, pesticides and veterinary drug residues.

Overall results

- There were 2 unsatisfactory samples. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.3%.



Unsatisfactory results

- The 2 unsatisfactory samples are shown below:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Thai steamed mullet on stove tray	Malachite green (Veterinary drug residues)	0.87 ppm ⁽¹⁾
Deep fried fish cake with spicy sauce	Malachite green (Veterinary drug residues)	0.012 ppm ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Not permitted in food, but the detected levels were unlikely to pose adverse health effects upon normal consumption.

Follow-up actions

- Trace source of food items in question.
- Request vendors to stop sale and dispose of incriminated food items.
- Issue warning letters to concerned vendors.
- Take follow-up samples for analysis.
- Take prosecution actions if there is sufficient evidence.

Advices to trade

- The unsatisfactory samples involved malachite green in ready-to-eat food. According to legislation, no one shall sell, for human consumption, any food which contains malachite green. The trade should source aquatic products from reliable suppliers. In case of doubt, ask for and check documents and certificates accompanying the consignment to ensure the supply is malachite green free.
- Although all samples for microbiological testing are satisfactory, the trade should always comply with hygienic practices which include:
 - maintain good personal hygiene;
 - wash raw materials thoroughly;
 - cook food thoroughly;
 - separate raw food from ready-to-eat food to prevent cross contamination;
 - keep food at safe temperatures (4°C or below; 60°C or above)

Advices to consumers

- Purchase from licensed and reliable food premises.
- Maintain a balanced diet to minimize risk.