

CFS announces study results on consumer acceptance of reformulated dim sum with reduced sodium

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (January 13) the study results on consumer acceptance of reformulated dim sum with reduced sodium. The results indicate that consumers accept a 10 to 20 per cent reduction of the sodium content in dim sum, suggesting that reducing the sodium content in dim sum is feasible for the industry.

Sodium is essential for body functions, but excessive sodium intake may increase the risk of developing high blood pressure. Untreated high blood pressure can lead to heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and more. The World Health Organization recommends the salt intake for adults should be less than 5 grams daily (i.e. 2 000 milligrams of sodium). However, the Report of Population Health Survey 2020-22 published by the Department of Health revealed that Hong Kong people aged 15 to 84 had an average daily salt intake of 8.4g. Therefore, the public needs to reduce salt intake.

The spokesman said, "According to a study on sodium content in dim sum conducted by the CFS in 2022, certain types of dim sum were found to contain high levels of sodium. Trade members were advised to reduce the sodium content in dim sum by modifying preparation methods and changing ingredients. However, some trade members expressed concerns that consumers might not accept less salty reformulated products."

In view of this, the CFS conducted a difference test between March and April last year. Seventy-two citizens aged 15 or above were recruited to taste standard and reduced-sodium (about 10 to 20 per cent reduction) samples of two types of dim sum: shrimp siu mai and steamed pork ribs with black bean sauce, in order to determine whether detectable sensory differences exist between them. Only 15 and 13 out of the 72 participants correctly identified the odd samples of shrimp siu mai and steamed pork ribs with black bean sauce respectively. The study findings suggested that there is no perceptible sensory difference between the standard and the reformulated dim sum.

The spokesman added that members of the public and the trade should take heed of the following recommendations when consuming or handling dim sum to avoid excessive intake of sodium for the public:

Advice to the public:

- Request the food to be served separately from sauces, and taste before dipping in sauces; and
- Maintain a balanced diet with variety and become accustomed to a milder taste by gradual cutbacks on salty foods.

Advice to the trade:

- Reduce the sodium content of food through product reformulation making reference to the CFS's Trade Guidelines for Reducing Sodium in Foods, e.g. by choosing ingredients with lower sodium content, using natural ingredients for flavouring and marinating; and
- Serve sauces in separate containers to allow consumers to add sauces based on their preference.

For details of the study, please visit the CFS website at www.cfs.gov.hk.