
Survey on Popular Food Items: Hotpot soup bases

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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Background

- It is good to consume hotpot meals when the temperature is low. With a great variety of ingredients and soup bases for different styles of hotpot, we can choose whatever we like to eat.



- While we are enjoying the good food, we must be careful and pay special attention to food safety measures to safeguard our health.
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) conducted a survey on hotpot soup bases to assess its safety recently.

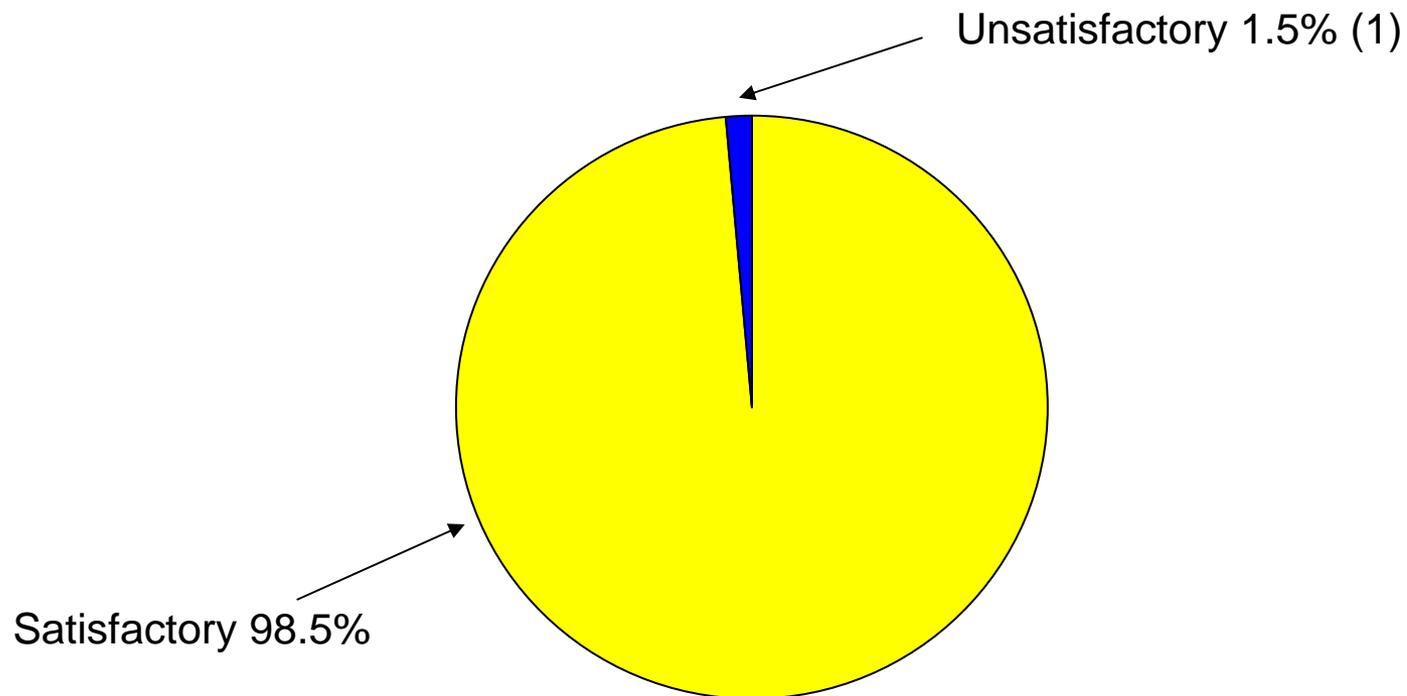
Samples and types of tests

- The CFS collected 67 hotpot soup base samples of various types, including prepackaged soup packs for testing from more than 20 food premises.
- Tests covered heavy metal, colouring matter, preservative, antioxidant and mineral oil analyses.



Overall results

- There was 1 unsatisfactory sample. Overall satisfactory rate was 98.5%.



Unsatisfactory results

- The 1 unsatisfactory sample is shown below:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Mala soup base	Orange II (Colouring matters)	Detected ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Not permitted colouring matter in food. It is of low toxicity and should not 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 and consumers (1)

- The trade should comply with the legal requirements and follow Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP). They should use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner.
- Should take heed of the “Five Keys to Food Safety”:

(1) Choose

- Patronise reliable and hygienic shops for hotpot ingredients or soup bases. Select more fresh foods.
- For prepackaged foods or soup bases, check whether the packaging is intact and pay attention to the expiry date on the food labels.



Advices to trade and consumers (2)

(2) Clean

- Observe good personal and food hygiene when preparing foods.
 - All food ingredients must be thoroughly washed.
 - After washing the vegetable, then soak them in water for one hour as this can help reduce pesticide residues.
 - Poultry meat, pork and beef should be washed and sliced into thin strips for easy cooking.
 - For shellfish like scallops and geoducks, scrub the shells thoroughly and remove their internal organs.
 - Before eating and handling food ingredients, wash hands thoroughly.
 - If there is a wound on the hand, cover it properly with a waterproof bandage or wear a glove before handling food.

Advices to trade and consumers (3)

(3) Separate

- When shopping for hotpot ingredients, buy prepackaged foods first and raw meat, poultry and seafood last.
- Raw meat should be put separately from other foods in shopping trolley or bag to prevent its juices from contaminating other foods.
- During eating, we must handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely:
 - Avoid contact between raw and cooked foods on table to prevent cross-contamination.
 - When eating, use separate sets of chopsticks and utensils with different appearances to handle raw and cooked foods.

Advices to trade and consumers (4)

(4) Cook thoroughly

- In the whole process, take thoroughly cooked food out of the pot only when the soup is boiling completely. Whenever water or soup is added to the pot, wait until it is boiling hot before adding food for cooking.
- Do not eat shrimps that are cooked lightly. Rather, shrimps should be fully cooked until the shells turn red and the flesh turn white and unclear. As for shucked oysters, they should be cooked in the boiling water for at least 3 minutes before consumption.
- Use raw eggs as hotpot ingredients:
 - Eggs with cracked shells should be discarded immediately as they are prone to be contaminated by dangerous microorganisms.
 - Before consumption, eggs must be washed thoroughly to remove the dirt on the shell. Wash hands thoroughly after handling or touching eggs.
 - Do not consume cooked foods that are mixed with raw eggs as dangerous microorganisms may be present in raw eggs.

Advices to trade and consumers (5)

(5) Safe temperature

- Most hotpot ingredients should be stored in a fridge at 4 °C or below, while frozen foods should be stored in a freezer at -18 °C or below.
- Do not thaw frozen foods at room temperature as bacteria may multiply rapidly in food. It is preferable to defrost frozen foods in a fridge or microwave.



Advices to trade and consumers (6)

- Consumers should pay attention to our consumption amount and follow a balanced diet:
 - Use clear soup base to reduce fat intake as it contains less fat than bone, mala and sacha soup bases.
 - Eat vegetables first to fill up ourselves and then meat to prevent overeating.
 - Eat more vegetables with high dietary fibre and fewer fatty meats, animal offal and seafood, and use fewer sauces and condiments.
 - If there are nutrition labels for hotpot products, make healthier food choices by referring to their nutritional contents and choosing those lower in fat, sodium (salt) and sugars.

