

Survey on Popular Food Items: Hong Kong Style Tea Restaurant

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

November 2011

Background

- “Hong Kong style tea restaurant” is a unique kind of restaurants full of local colour.
- With a wide selection of affordable menus, these restaurants are not only popular among local people, but also attract many visitors to patronize.
- As such, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) recently conducted a project on “Hong Kong style tea restaurant” as the theme of “Survey on popular food items” to assess the safety of relevant food items.

Types of food samples

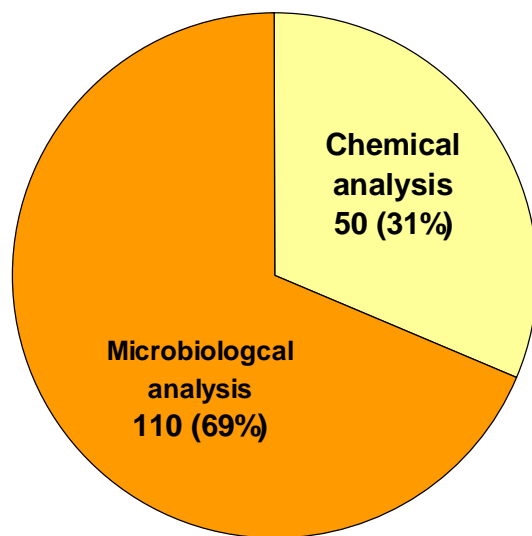
- The CFS collected 160 samples of various food types for testing from more than 100 Hong Kong style tea restaurants.

Type of food	Number of samples	Percentage
Appetizers	27	17%
Soups	7	4%
Buns, pies and sandwiches	34	21%
Siu-mei	10	6%
Main dishes	23	14%
Noodle and rice dishes	35	22%
Drinks and others	24	15%
Total	160	100%

N.B.: Figures may not add up to total due to rounding.

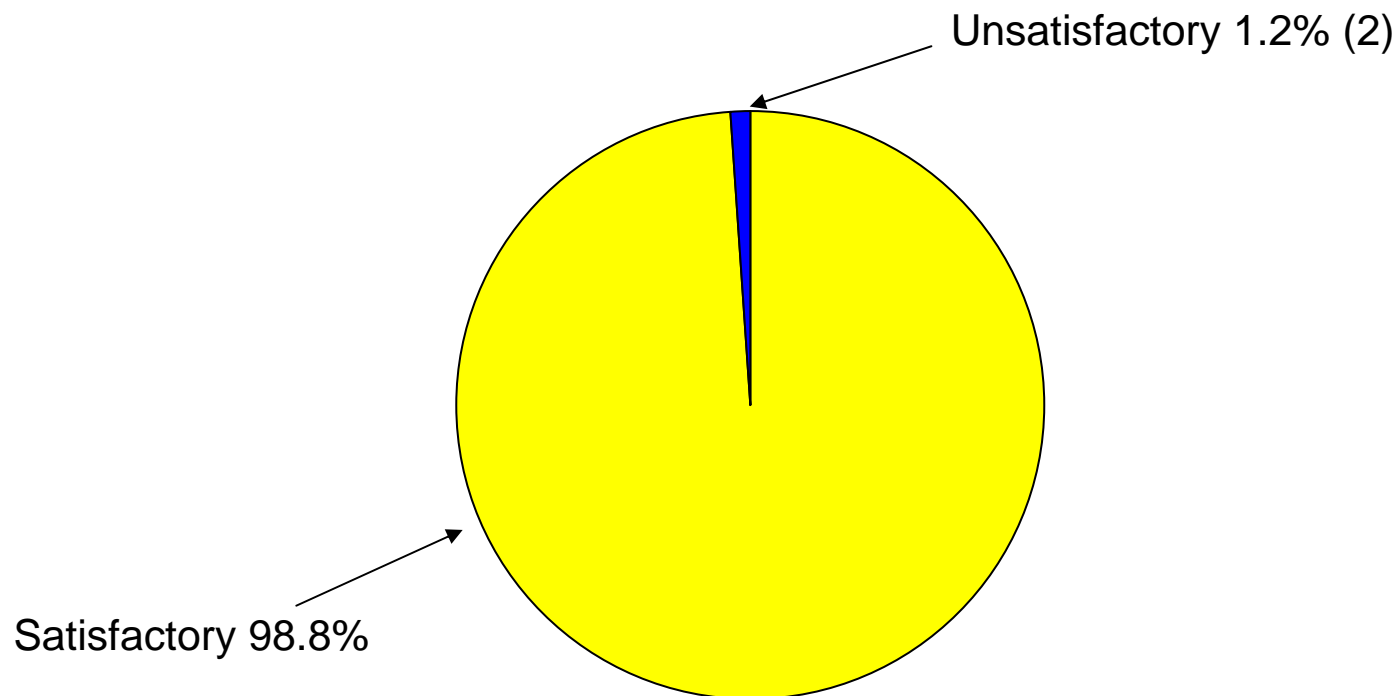
Types of analysis

- **Microbiological analysis** (included tests of pathogens such as *Bacillus cereus*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Salmonella*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*)
- **Chemical analysis** (covered hazards which are commonly present such as colouring matters, metallic contamination, preservatives, pesticides and veterinary drug residues)



Overall results

- Two of the 160 samples were unsatisfactory. Overall satisfactory rate was 98.8%.



Appetizers

- Appetizers are usually pan-fried and deep-fried food.
- These food items are usually prepared by batches in advance. Inappropriate storage conditions, e.g., keeping together with raw food, prolonged storage within temperature danger zone (4 - 60°C), may increase the risks of cross contamination and bacterial growth.
- On the other hand, preservatives may be used for food preservation in some restaurants.

Appetizers (Cont'd)

- Samples included chicken drumstick and French fries, cervelat sausage, samosa and spring roll.



- All microbiological and chemical test results were satisfactory.

Soups

- Samples included cream of mushroom soup, chowder and borscht.



- Samples were mainly for microbiological tests. All results were satisfactory.

Buns, pies and sandwiches

- Preparation of buns, pies and sandwiches involves multiple manual handling steps. Some ingredients are prepared in advance.
- Poor personal hygiene and keeping ingredients at inappropriate temperatures will facilitate bacterial growth.

Buns, pies and sandwiches (Cont'd)

- Samples included egg tart, club sandwich, French toast and pork chop bun.



- Tests included analysis of pathogens.
- All samples passed the tests.



Siu-mei

- Preparation of siu-mei usually involves multiple manual handling steps and siu-mei is displayed for sale under ambient temperatures. Therefore, it is susceptible to contamination with pathogens.
- Repeated reports of food poisoning outbreaks associated with siu-mei have been received.



Siu-mei (Cont'd)

- Samples included barbecued pork, marinated pork sausage, poached chicken and roasted pork.



Siu-mei (Cont'd)

- Tests mainly included analysis of pathogens and 1 sample was unsatisfactory:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Poached chicken*	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	480000/g ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Intake of food with excessive amount of *Staphylococcus aureus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

* The result has been announced in the Food Safety Report for September.



Main dishes

- Main dishes are usually served hot to customers. However, consumption of inadequately cooked or reheated items may lead to food poisoning.
- Samples included fish fillet and sweet corn, Sichuan mapo tofu, salt and pepper cuttlefish, Chinese style beef tenderloin and steamed grass carp.



Main dishes (Cont'd)

- Chemical analysis included testing of preservatives, colouring matters for intensifying colour of food and veterinary drugs.
- All samples were satisfactory for microbiological tests. One sample was unsatisfactory for veterinary drug residues:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Steamed grass carp*	Malachite green	2.2 ppm ⁽¹⁾

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

* The result has been announced in the Food Safety Report for September.



Noodle and rice dishes

- Samples included noodle with wonton, Singapore style fried vermicella, spaghetti with meat sauce, baked pork chop with rice and satay beef with instant noodle.



- All samples were satisfactory.

Drinks and others

- The public has been concerned about hygienic quality of drinks, especially the presence of pathogens in iced drinks.



Drinks and others (Cont'd)

- Samples included milk tea, coffee, lemon tea, red bean icy drink and fruit punch.
- All samples were satisfactory.



Follow-up actions

- Trace sources of food items in question.
- Request the vendors concerned to stop sale and dispose of incriminated food items.
- Issue warning letters to the vendors concerned.
- Take follow-up samples for analysis.

Advice to the trade

- There was one unsatisfactory sample with the presence of malachite green. 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 relevant documents and health certificates accompanying the consignment to ensure the supply is free from malachite green.
- There was another unsatisfactory sample with excessive amount of *Staphylococcus aureus*. In order to minimize the risk of food poisoning, the trade should always follow the “5 Keys to Food Safety”:
 - ❑ Choose - Choose safe raw materials
 - ❑ Clean - Keep hands and utensils clean
 - ❑ Separate - Separate raw and cooked food
 - ❑ Cook - Cook thoroughly
 - ❑ Safe Temperature - Keep food at safe temperature



Advice to consumers

- Buy food from licensed and reliable food premises.
- Maintain a balanced diet to minimise food risks.
- Avoid foods that are high in energy, sugar, salt, fat and/or cholesterol.