

ISSUE 69

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THE FOOD



ISSUE

Boba, bubble tea, pearl milk tea — you either love it or hate it. Head down to your nearest mall or neighbourhood store and you'll likely find a bubble tea stall or two. And every few months, a new bubble tea brand pops up, with no sign of dying out in the near future. What's the deal?

The Business of Bubbles

The Timeline of Bubble Tea

Bubble tea isn't a new phenomenon in Singapore — in fact, it came and left pretty quickly. Will this current trend last?



The Five 'Cs' of Bubble Tea

What makes bubble tea so popular? Here are some ways the drink has made its mark in the world — will it take over Starbucks?

<p>CHEAP It's slightly more expensive than a kopitiam, but less than a Starbucks. \$3.40 Average bubble tea cost per cup</p>	<p>CONVENIENT Bubble tea stalls are popping up in every neighbourhood and mall. 47 Current number of bubble tea brands</p>	<p>CUSTOMISABLE An average customer can have multiple options for their tea. 40 Average menu options for drinks & toppings</p>
<p>CHOICE There are exotic teas, coffees, and fruit juices, with multiple toppings and preparation styles. Some exotic toppings available include CHARCOAL, COLLAGEN, VODKA</p>	<p>CHARM Bubble teas have to look Instaworthy; these are done with colour, packaging, logo, and toppings. The most popular Instagram bubble teas feature BROWN SUGAR CHEESE FRUIT JUICE</p>	

The Business Side of Boba

What does it take to run a bubble tea franchise, and what are the profit margins? Here are some facts and figures.

Setting up a bubble tea franchise can range from **\$80,000 - \$450,000** per outlet

Some operators say **NET PROFIT MARGINS** range from **20%-30%**
Koi, for instance, made S\$45 million in 2017 at a 23% margin.

The master franchisee of **Gong Cha Singapore** is Kang Puay Seng, founder of **Mr. Bean**

One random listing of a bubble tea shop in Orchard selling for \$150,000 shows **MONTHLY REVENUE \$40,000** and **NET PROFIT \$5,000**

The global bubble tea market will reach **US\$3.21 billion by 2023** according to research firm Allied Market Research

Bubble Tea Facts

We all know that bubble tea isn't healthy the way we all order them, but just how bad are they?

A cup with regular sweetness contains **34g** of sugar
Maximum human daily intake should be capped at 50g

According to Singapore's Health Promotion Board, pearls add up to more than **100** calories which require

10 minutes of jogging to burn

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Student contributors always welcome!



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By Zhiqi Wang

CULTURED MEAT

What is the hype?

With the introduction of regulations on cultured meat by Singapore Food Agency (SFA), cultured meat is finally no longer a topic in science fiction, but something that can affect all of us. In terms of regulation, there had been much uncertainty regarding the health concerns of consumption of such meat, especially when it comes to traditional definitions of all-natural food. The approval from Singapore no doubt provides a much needed confidence boost for many countries' regulators and consumers alike.

Cultured meat is significantly different from plant-based ones because of their fundamental technologies: Cultured meat is produced in an incubator where animal cells can proliferate to become meat tissue, while plant-based meat uses a variety of plant ingredients to emulate real meat (eg. heme from plant roots emulates the colour of meat). Under the four sections - Variety, Readiness, Time, and Cost - here's a look at how cultured meat may fare in the near future.



TIME

Experts on the topic believe that consumers in Singapore will be able to find cultured meat by the end of next year. However, this doesn't mean that cultured meat will replace conventionally-produced meat by then because these meats will likely only be available in specialty stores and restaurants. Supermarket-level availability might only be a reality in the next 3-5 years and even that remains highly dependent on cost improvements.



VARIETY

Startups around the world are working hard to develop commercially viable products using cellular agriculture. These range from beef offered by Mosaicmeat (based in the Netherlands), to chicken (Future Meat Technology, Israel), to eggs (JUST, USA), to our locally-based Shik Meats reinventing seafood. This means that not only will we be expecting cell based steak and ground meat, we can also expect everything else from fish to egg products.



READINESS

The regulatory approval from SFA has officially fired off the race for companies to get their first products approved and shipped out. There are many dimensions to readiness, including technology, market and regulatory, and all of these need to be achieved to a certain level before it becomes available.

In terms of regulation, many questions remain on how such products need to be labelled in order to inform consumers. This is evident in the debate in the EU regarding the labelling of plant-based meat as 'meat' and non-dairy milk as 'milk'. Singapore is indeed the testbed of cultured meat from around the world and all eyes are on this crucial test market to convince other regulators and consumers of the viability.



COST

The price of cultured meat is almost certainly going to be many times higher than conventionally-produced meat at the beginning. After all, traditional animal cultivation has had a head start of hundreds of years, with gradual improvement in productivity and efficiency over time.

However, cultured meat has a fundamentally less complex production, so the cost of producing cultured meat will undoubtedly be reduced over time. Hence, the true question is whether there will be sufficient consumers who are willing to support these startups in their journey to commercialisation. A key measure used in price estimation is the cost of cell medium, and the effective reduction of medium price can accelerate the commercialisation of cultured meat.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

In conclusion, there is a lot to be excited about cultured meat in Singapore (we are literally the world's first to approve of the sale) and we can be among the first to taste cruelty-free animal products. Nonetheless, there are loads of questions unanswered at the moment and the society, together with regulators, will need to collectively decide on the future of this technology.

After all, eating is one of the most personal (and some say important) activities for almost everyone (especially Singaporeans), and providing consumers an alternative that doesn't compromise taste or affordability might just be the defining work of our generation.



Mouth-Watering 2D Delights: Food in Anime

by Lindsay Wong



With so many dedicated foodies out there, it's no surprise that food has a huge presence in popular culture around the world, including anime. For many, food in anime has a soothing effect and is even a source of escapism - lots of people have even attempted to recreate the food they've seen in anime. Not only is food presented beautifully in anime, it has also become the main theme for many of the most popular series.

FOOD WARS!

This action-packed comedy series is at the forefront when it comes to food. Set in an elite culinary school in Tokyo, where rich kids hellbent on mastering fine cuisine engage in food battles to prove their cooking skills in coming up with creative dishes. The series follows Soma Yukihira's journey as he yearns to become the best chef at the academy, following in his family's footsteps. The hilariously over-the-top anime is about foodgasm - for instance, characters' clothes fly off when they eat something delicious!

GOURMET GIRL GRAFFITI

This slice-of-life anime isn't just about food and cooking - it's about the bonds one can form through consuming good food together. As a middle schooler, Ryou Machiko was set on becoming an accomplished cook. She struggled initially because her food didn't taste good, even though they looked appetising. However, Ryou soon realises that her cooking improves when she is surrounded by people that she's close to. Many viewers will be able to relate to this central theme of how good food and good company can make for the perfect meal.

MS. KOIZUMI LOVES RAMEN NOODLES

This series is for ramen lovers. Koizumi is a beautiful high school girl who goes to great lengths - from climbing a mountain to failing a test - in search of the most delicious ramen. At the same time, she also has to deal with drama in her own life: her classmate Yui Oosawa is infatuated with her, and somehow uninvitedly joins Koizumi on her adventures even as she prefers to dine alone. Being so fixated on ramen, Koizumi has little interest in anything else, and she also struggles to make her own bowl of ramen.

DAGASHI KASHI

Dagashi Kashi focuses on traditional Japanese candies, or dagashi. The series centres around the Shikada family who has run a candy business for nine generations. The son, Kokonotsu, refuses to take over the business until the arrival of Hotaru Shidare - in order to get Kokonotsu's father to work for her father, she has to get him to take over the Shikada business. And so begins Hotaru's mission to enlighten Kokonotsu on the joy of dagashi. Viewers may feel nostalgic watching this as it showcases the craft of Japanese candies.

YUME-IRO PATISSIERE

Considered a classic among anime fans, "Yume-iro Patisserie" centres around Ichigo Amano, a girl with a sweet tooth who attends a prestigious culinary school specialising in desserts after discovering her amazing tasting abilities. In spite of the fact that she's a beginner lacking skills, she's placed in the same top group as a trio of boys dubbed the "Sweets Princes" who are each known for their expertise in a particular dessert: traditional Japanese sweets, candied flowers, and chocolate. The four characters work together in achieving their goals with their sweet specialties.

YAKITATE!! JAPAN

Bread enthusiast Kazuma Azuma sets out on a mission to give Japan a competitive edge when it comes to bread, particularly in comparison to European countries like France, UK, and Germany. Kazuma is blessed with a superpower - he has the ability to cook bread just with his own hands. As he starts working at a prestigious bakery chain, he yearns to create an unique variety of bread that's like no other. This series will make any viewer crave freshly baked bread for their next meal.

STUDIO GHIBLI FILMS

Although there are no Studio Ghibli films that are specifically about food, they deserve a special mention - food in these movies look appetising and delicious. Many of their films have some kind of iconic food or meal, such as Calcifer's breakfast in "Howl's Moving Castle", the ramen in "Pororo", the herring and pumpkin pie in "Kiki's Delivery Service", the bento boxes in "My Neighbor Totoro", and all the food featured in "Spirited Away", just to name a few.

visual eats

by nina gan

FOOD REALITY TV

As the saying goes, 'we eat with our eyes', so it wouldn't be a stretch to consider that we can actually 'taste' the food we see on screen. This is probably why there are so many types of reality programmes that focus on food these days. Here are some categories of food-themed programmes that'll get you salivating.

chef shows

ABOUT THE FOOD MAKERS

While many of us love watching food being prepared or eaten, this category of reality TV is more like a documentary that focuses instead on the people who make the food. The most popular of these is probably **Chef's Table**, where each episode takes us on a stunning visual of food prepared by the best chefs around the world. Watch Michelin-starred chefs create masterpieces that look too good to be eaten.

Closer to home, **Street Food: Asia** showcased not just popular hawker fare - it also chronicled the lives of those who make street food for a living. Singapore hawkers appeared in Episode 8, which featured Halq Road's *Rutu Piring* and Sin Kee Famous Chicken Rice, among others.



travel shows

HAVE FOOD, WILL TRAVEL

One of the best aspects of travelling is trying local food, and these food-travel programmes allow us to imagine the treats that await us in these countries. Not only do they show us the beauty of the destinations, but also the culture surrounding their food.

Somebody **Feed Phil** showcases some popular foods recommended by local guides, for example in Season 4's Singapore episode, one of Phil's guides, KF Seetoh, takes him to a local market for some nasi lemak. In **Ugly Delicious**, chef David Chang travels the world with writers, artists, and other chefs who use food as a vehicle to break down cultural barriers. Anthony Bourdain practically rose to fame through his many food-travel programmes, including **Parts Unknown**.



If you're tired of reality series, there's also a slew of food-themed dramas to dig into. Japanese slice-of-life dramas like **Midnight Diner** and **Samurai Gourmet** showcase Japanese comfort food in the forefront while Korean dramas like **Eccentric! Chef Moon** and **Oh My Ghostess** take you behind the scenes where chefs prepare Korean cuisine. No matter what your preference, there's no shortage of food-related content to watch.



cooking competitions

IT'S HOT IN THE KITCHEN

Everybody loves a bit of drama, especially when it comes to the kitchen! Cooking contests like **The Great British Bake Off** kept us glued to our screens watching amateur bakers bake the most audacious cakes. **Iron Chef**, from Japan, was one of the first dramatic cooking shows - it pitted a guest chef against one of the show's resident "Iron Chefs" (from Japanese, Chinese, and French cuisine backgrounds), using one theme ingredient.

Similarly, **Chopped** challenges 4 professional chefs to turn a box of mystery ingredients into a 3-course meal in a race against the clock. **MasterChef**, which pits together competitive amateur chefs in the kitchen arena, is so popular that it has multiple iterations, including **Junior MasterChef** and of course, **MasterChef Singapore**.



restaurant makeover

FLIPPING GOOD

We all love a good makeover show - and in addition to fashion or interior makeovers, we also have restaurant makeovers, where experts visit ailing restaurants to help them turn their businesses over. These programmes focus as much about the restaurant interior and service as they do about the food.

The most popular of these programmes is probably Gordon Ramsay's **Kitchen Nightmares**, which sees the fiery-tempered chef visit struggling restaurateurs to help them turn their restaurants around (with a lot of swearing involved). **Restaurant Impossible** sees Chef Robert Irvine try to salvage restaurants on the verge of shutting down with just US\$10,000 and 2 days, while similarly, **Restaurant Makeover** challenges industry professionals (2 restaurant professionals, a designer, and a chef) to overhaul a struggling restaurant with limited budget and time.

EATING IN DYSTOPIA

BY NINA GAN

WHAT SCIENCE FICTION TELLS US ABOUT THE FUTURE OF FOOD

MOST OF US WATCH SCI-FI FILMS FOR A GLIMPE OF WHAT OUR FUTURE MAY BE, WHETHER THEY PORTRAY A BRIGHT OR GRIM FUTURE. ONE THING IS FOR SURE: FOOD IN SCI-FI IS BLEAK AND DEHUMANISED. IT SEEMS THAT FOOD OF THE FUTURE IS NOT SOMETHING TO BE ENJOYED, BUT RATHER JUST SOMETHING TO SUSTAIN OUR BODIES. HERE ARE SOME FOOD TRENDS DEPICTED IN SCI-FI:

FOOD WILL BE TASTELESS

The food you see in sci-fi is usually some reconstituted glop that looks as colourless as it tastes. In *The Matrix*, the Nebuchadnezzar crew are seen consuming gruel nicknamed a "bowl of snof" because in the real world, food is scarce. As the crew states, it's got "synthetic amino acids, vitamins, and minerals. Everything the body needs." In the future, it seems, food is isolated from flavour, joy or comfort.

In Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, there's a restaurant scene where patrons pick a colourful dish from a menu, but they're all the same scoop of glop anyway. In George Orwell's *1984*, a cafeteria lunch is represented by a "pinkish-grey stew, a hint of bread, and a cube of cheese." Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* depicts a futuristic engineered society where all food seems synthesised with almost no natural ingredients or cooking required.



THE MATRIX

FARMING IS DESTROYED

All our food that we consume today comes from farms - usually large-scale, industrialised farms. With climate change and current industrial farming practices, sci-fi hammers home the message that we have to change the way we consume before we destroy our planet. In *Interstellar*, we see how the degradation of farming has led to food shortages, while in *Blade Runner 2049*, we see a vast, grey agricultural landscape that shows how we need to evolve to survive.



INTERSTELLAR

SNOWPIERCER



BUGS ARE THE FUTURE PROTEIN

We all know that the largest part of the food pyramid is carbohydrates, but in the future, it's replaced by protein - specifically, bugs. Not everyone can stomach the idea, even though bugs - like crickets and earthworms - can be a sustainable future protein supply. Bugs are featured in many sci-fi movies: Klingons in *Star Trek* eat serpent worms called Gagh, people in *Futurama* find alien bugs called Popplers addictive, and the passengers of *Snowpiercer* are fed jelly made from cockroaches.

FOOD WILL BE 3D-PRINTED

Not all food from the future needs to be bleak. In the original *Star Trek*, food is created in various coloured cubes by a machine dubbed the Replicator, which is capable of turning any molecule into a meal. The 3D printing technology exists today, and innovators are bringing creativity to the fore by producing 3D-printed food, whether it's to create intricate desserts or printing real-life food like pizzas for NASA astronauts. The potential for 3D-printed food to be mass-produced is tremendous, and it could be the way food can be produced in the future.



STAR TREK

NOODLES ARE STILL IN THE FUTURE

Despite the trend for bland food in the future, sci-fi seems to portray a lot of noodle-eating by protagonists. In *Blade Runner*, Rick Deckard is seen ordering ramen from a dingy Japanese street diner, while in *The Expanse*, the cop Joe Miller travels to Eros searching for Julie Mao and stops by a noodle cart for *Udangmyeon*, and *Battlestar Galactica*'s Ramon for Commander Adama's noodles. The noodles in these cases don't represent the future of food, but rather part of the cyberpunk culture that's inspired by technological advances in Asian metropolises.



BLADE RUNNER



SOYLENT GREEN

FOOD DEFINES HUMANITY AND HUMANITY DEFINES ITS FOOD

Food may just be a prop for dystopian sci-fi films, but in these fictional futures, we see a world that's disconnected from cooking, with a total degradation of the environment thanks to industrialised farming that's meant to feed the world. Let's hope our food in the future doesn't go down the route of *Soylent Green*, where our overpopulated planet survives on dubious green crackers made out of humans.

BY NINA GAN

SWEET SG



SINGAPORE'S LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH SUGAR

We all know that sugar is bad. Many of us are trying to limit our daily intake of sugar, but it can be hard to control our intake especially during the festive seasons when we often can't control what we eat or drink. As Senior Minister of State for Health Edwin Tong said: "Although we have made progress in encouraging Singaporeans to exercise more and eat healthier, our daily sugar intake remains high." But how bad is Singapore's love affair with sugar?

SINGAPORE LOVES SUGAR

MOH found in 2018 that Singaporeans were consuming an average of 12 teaspoons (60g) of sugar daily - more than the 5 teaspoon limit recommended by the WHO! According to HPB, more than half of this comes from sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) - we actually consumed more pre-packaged SSBs than many other Asian jurisdictions!

Everyone knows that surplus sugar converts into fats, bringing about chronic diseases like obesity, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes.

Obesity is considered the strongest risk factor for diabetes. In 7 years time, it is estimated that almost 1 out of 5 people in Singapore would become obese. The cost of obesity in Singapore was already \$2.77 billion in 2016 in terms of healthcare spending and lost productivity.

Singapore is currently ranked second in the world for diabetes among adults aged 18-65 years old - and 1 in 3 Singaporeans has a lifetime risk of developing diabetes, according to MOH which declared a War on Diabetes in 2016. In addition, an increased sugar consumption also contributes to a 30% increase in risk of acne, premature wrinkling, increased risk of cancers, and even mental illnesses like depression.

HOW TO DISCERN SUGARS

Sugar is ultimately an empty calorie: one teaspoon (or 5g) of sugar is equivalent to 20 calories - about the same as wholegrains and proteins, but it lacks the vitamins, minerals,



THE FUTURE OF SUGARY DRINKS IN SINGAPORE

By the end of this year, all pre-packaged non-alcoholic drinks sold in Singapore will be labelled with a "Nutri-Grade" system. This colour-coded system labels drinks from A (dark green) to D (red) depending on how much sugar and saturated fat they contain, with a maximum of 10% and 2.8% respectively. Right now, 71% of pre-packaged drinks sold fall under grades C and D, according to MOH. From end-2021, advertising will be banned for all pre-packaged drinks containing more than 10g of sugar per 100g.

This measure to label the drinks was implemented after other considerations, including a total ban and a sugar tax, were eliminated. The latter would have increased the cost of living for lower-income families who tend to spend more on cheap high-caloric sugar-laden processed food and drinks, according to Head of Economics at NTU, Euston Quah.

The labelling will extend to freshly-made drinks, from herbal drinks to bubble teas, as it's clear that they're a substantial and growing source of sugar intake for many Singaporeans.

The downside is that we may not realise we're consuming that much sugar, but you can start by looking carefully at the sodas, fruit juices, and pre-packaged drinks you consume - instead of just 'sugar', they may be labelled as cane sugar, fructose, or high fructose corn syrup. And if you need your bubble tea, consider no sugar.

and essential amino acids. In addition, wholegrains digest more slowly, keeping your blood sugar levels balanced, which makes it easier to sustain your energy.

Brown sugar and honey are perceived to have lower calories, but only marginally so - brown sugar has 19 calories and honey has 15 calories

Sugar isn't that visible in the food and drinks we consume. They're used in a number of food processes, from enhancing flavours in syrups and sauces to preserving canned fruits, and sweetening processed cereals and packaged drinks. Even whole fruits and foods like honey and milk contain sugar like fructose, sucrose, and glucose. This means that while fruit juice may have more nutrients than a single can of sugar-sweetened soda, it has the same effect on our body, as it's still sugar.

BY LYDIA TAN

ATAS HAWKER OFFERINGS

Gourmet Meals in the Heartlands

For most Singaporeans, hawker centres are the one-stop place to get your meals. Not only are they extremely convenient, they also tend to be much more affordable. With such a large variety of offerings, it's only fitting that our hawker culture has been inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list. However, if you have some cash to spend but don't need the ambience of a fancy restaurant, here are our recommendations for some of the more expensive foods that you can find at classic hawker centres.

1 COFFEE BREAK (Amoy Street Food Centre)

Think of Coffee Break as a cafe in a hawker centre. Take your pick from their wide drink selection, from flavoured lattes and mochas to traditional kopis and tehs. They even have non-dairy and non-caffeinated options for those with specific dietary requirements. If you want something to go with your cuppa, try their wide variety of toasts. Their premium drink prices are slightly more expensive than your average coffee shop offerings at about \$3+, but are much cheaper than most cafes in the CBD. What's better, you can buy their drink mixes and toast spreads to recreate at home yourself.



2 LI YUAN MEE POK (710 Clementi West Street Z)

Formerly known as Ah Hoe Mee Pok, this stall in Clementi serves up traditional mee pok with a unique twist. Run by a Japanese man called Mr Naoji Kuribara, two of the more expensive items on their menu are the Japanese Fusion Mee Pok with Char Siew and Crayfish Mee Pok, which both stand at \$10. The Fusion Mee Pok has the option of either a miso or shoyu base whereas the Crayfish version is more suited for those who prefer the taste of regular mee pok but with a little extra added to it.



3 JAMES' QUESADILLAS AND BRUNCH (Amoy Street Food Centre)

Mexican food is pretty rare at most hawkers centres so this is a unique find in itself. Located right next to Coffee Break, it specialises in Western-fusion Mexican food, namely quesadillas, burritos, and rice/salad bowls. The whole menu is pretty customisable from the variety of ingredients and add-on combinations that you can pick from. Depending on the options you choose, the prices can vary from \$5 to \$10.50 so you can choose what you want based on your budget and preference.



4 DING HAO SUGARCANE (Champ Champ Food Centre)

If you're not planning to splurge too much on your main meal or dessert, why not treat your friends to drinks instead? Juice stalls tend to be more expensive, however, this stall takes the cake with its 3-litre sugarcane juice tower that goes for \$15. In addition, they also sell 15-litre servings of sugarcane juice at a hefty \$8 per mug. Its large quantity makes it great for sharing with a group of friends or family so if you're looking to try this out, make sure to save some space after your meal!



5 RAMEN TAISHO (Maxwell Food Centre)

This is no instant ramen - this is the real deal. While that promises higher quality ramen, that also means they carry the same restaurant prices, from \$10.80 onwards. Besides their tonkotsu ramen, they also have tsukemen (dipping ramen) sets and mazemen (soupy ramen) options. If you like, you can add on sides, drinks, and a caramel pudding (known as purin in Japanese) for dessert. Whether you're eating alone or sharing with friends, this stall ensures you get a full meal that's definitely worth the bill.



OUT OF THE BOX:

INNOVATIVE FAST FOOD ADVERTISING

The world of fast food advertising is as colourful as its products. Never mind the extra grams of sugar and sodium that would make nutritionists frown - fast food brands want you to know that they're fun and have personality, a perfect place to have your next meal at. Here are some interesting advertising campaigns from fast food brands:

Food poisoning - we've all been there before. Hugging our porcelain thrones, cosplaying the Merlion perfectly, and releasing explosive excretory bombs. It's not exactly the cleansing detox diet that anybody would want.

In order to prevent such an unfortunate situation from happening again, however, apart from making sure that all your food is thoroughly cooked before consumption, here's how to make sure that the food is safe to even be cooked in the first place. aka if they have (really) expired or not.

Cheat Sheet

#69 How To Tell if Food's Gone Bad?

mold spores spread easily



ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE

If you find mold on a piece of bread, toss the whole loaf away. Don't cry that it's "a waste of money" because the others are "perfectly fine". Bread is porous, and the tiny microscopic spores of the mold can spread easily throughout the entire loaf, which can cause allergic reactions and respiratory problems in some people. A dollar or so is not worth the risk and hefty medical bill you'll have to pay when you're at the doctor's hours later.

Whether it's on fish, raw meat, or sliced deli meat like ham and salami, a sticky, slimy feel is never a good sign. A very distinctive tell-tale sign that it has gone bad would be a foul odour, but in any case, should you be having a blocked nose, you can't go wrong with feeling it out (pun intended).

discoloured portions



FRUITS AND VEGETABLES CANNOT BE SOFTIES

Unless you're having a smoothie, no fruit or vegetable should be mushy or grainy. Other telling signs include discolouring, funky smells, mold, and wrinkly skin that is peeling away. It's alright to consume after simply cutting away the spoilt parts though, if possible, unless the entire fruit or vegetable is just one lump of mush barely holding it together.

WHEN DAIRY IS NO LONGER DANDY

When it comes to milk, yoghurt and cheese that has gone bad, look out for a pungent, sour smell and/or taste (spit it out immediately if that's the case). Milk and yoghurt after opening can be kept for a week after the printed expiry date if refrigerated properly, but when milk becomes somewhat yoghurt-like, and yoghurt becomes somewhat cheese-like in consistency, chances are what you're thinking is right - it has spoiled.

If you spot non-white mold in a soft cheese like Brie, or non-blue in Blue Cheese, chuck the whole thing into a bin. If you spot mold on a hard cheese, then just cut the moldy part off and you're good to go.



non-white mold on cheese

WHEN YOUR CANNED FOOD CANNOT DO

While canned foods may seem contamination-proof with extremely long shelf lives, they can spoil too, if the metal has been corroded and the can has not been stored in a cool and dry place.

Cans with lids that bulge and can be pressed down on, have rust on them, or are leaking or dented are usually goners, possibly contaminated with bacteria like Clostridium botulinum which causes botulism - it can paralyse and even kill you with just a small amount consumed.

When opened, rising bubbles, unnatural looking colours, pungent smells, and a loud hiss escaping from the can are tell-tale signs of bacterial presence, and that the contents have gone bad.



dented is bad



WENDY'S DISS RAP MIXTAPE

In recent years, fast food brands have started using teen lingo to appeal to millennials and go viral online. Wendy's social media strategy has found much success in replying to its competitors' tweets, roasting them to perfection.

Wendy's took its roasting to new heights in 2018, when it released a rap mixtape titled "We Beeffin?" which dissed McDonald's and Burger King. The 10-minute mixtape, which Wendy's said was recorded by its mascot, pulled no punches, using an arsenal of food puns only a fast food brand could pull off. On "Rest in Grease", Wendy's rapped that she is "fast food's First Lady", and teased McDonald's for frequently having faulty ice cream machines.

The sheer absurdity of the campaign was enough to make the mixtape go viral. Two songs gained over one million streams on Spotify, and the mixtape trended on US Twitter upon release. While some music critics dismissed the songs as "generic", the advertising industry was stunned by what appeared to be a wild brainstorming idea come to life.



KFCHEESE

Many Singaporeans love the cheese sauce in KFC's cheesy fries. When KFC launched two new special dishes with its signature cheese sauce last November, the narrator in the advertisement proclaimed that "everything is better with cheese". The camera panned across different dishes drowning in the sauce, including McDonald's fries and a Burger King Whopper. The advertisement gets bolder - your favourite breakfast chwee kueh could also use more cheese, according to KFC. If there is ever a time when KFC would join forces with other fast food brands, we now know what they would most eagerly bring to the table.



BURGER KING UK: SUPPORT OUR COMPETITORS TOO

As food companies continue to retrench employees during the pandemic, Burger King UK posted a notice on its social media pages last November telling its customers to buy from its competitors. Titled "Order from McDonald's", Burger King said that rival food chains and independent food outlets deserve consumer support as they hire thousands of workers in the UK. Who would've guessed that Burger King would one day say that "getting a Big Mac is also not such a bad thing"?

By humanising a problem shared by almost all food brands, Burger King won praise online for its candidness and significant media coverage abroad. It even inspired copycat versions of the advertisement from fast food chains across the globe, such as Subway Singapore.

Cynics would say that this is virtue signalling - many of these brands earn millions annually while paying minimum wages to employees - but the advertisement is nonetheless memorable and another sign that such candid advertisements are the future of fast food advertising.



Packed with MORE Meat. LESS Marketing.

SUBWAY'S "MARKETING BUDGET CUTS"

Last November, Subway Singapore released advertisements which only occupied half the advertising space on billboards, as they had "spent all their marketing budget on more meat in their Meat Stack sandwiches". The Powerpoint aesthetic was intentional but clear, perhaps even nicer than those advertisements which overcompensate in complexity and end up missing the point of promoting a product. This advertisement was tongue-in-cheek and eye-catching, making it an effective way for passers-by to remember Subway's new sandwich.

If you're wondering if Subway Singapore really spent less money on marketing, they did not. An advertising agency likely made a pitch to keep things amateurish, and they had to purchase the entire billboard space despite filling only half of it.

Keep your eyes peeled for the next advertisement from fast food brands. Always at the forefront of trying outlandish ideas, fast food brands may inadvertently drive a shift towards more ambitious and out-of-the-box campaigns in the advertising world.





BY MANAL MOHAMMED
LECTURER, MEDICAL MICROBIOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Kombucha, kimchi and yogurt:

HOW FERMENTED FOODS COULD BE HARMFUL TO YOUR HEALTH

Fermented foods have become very popular, thanks to claims about their nutritional properties and reported health benefits, such as improving digestion, boosting immunity and even helping people lose weight. Some of the most popular fermented foods include kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut, tempeh, natto, miso, kimchi and sourdough bread.

But though these fermented foods might offer us many health perks, most people aren't aware that they might not work for everyone. For some people, fermented foods might cause serious health issues.

Fermented foods are loaded with microorganisms, such as live bacteria and yeast (known as probiotics). However, not all microorganisms are bad. Many, like probiotics, are harmless and are even beneficial to us.

During the process of fermentation, probiotics convert carbohydrates (starch and sugar) into alcohol and/or acids. These act as a natural preservative and give fermented foods their distinctive zest and flavour. Many factors affect fermentation, including the type of probiotic, the primary metabolites these microbes produce (such as lactic acid, or certain amino acids), and the food undergoing fermentation. For example, probiotic yogurt is produced by fermenting milk, most commonly with lactic acid bacteria that produce lactic acid.

Fermented foods contain high amounts of probiotics, which are generally considered safe for the majority of people. In fact, they've been shown to have antioxidant, anti-microbial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic and anti-atherosclerotic activity. However, some people might experience severe side effects after consuming fermented foods.



Bloating

The most common reaction to fermented foods is a temporary increase in gas and bloating. This is the result of excess gas being produced after probiotics kill harmful gut bacteria and fungi. Probiotics secrete antimicrobial peptides that kill harmful pathogenic organisms like Salmonella and E. Coli.

A recent study showed this antimicrobial effect of probiotic Lactobacilli strains found in commercial yogurt. Although bloating after eating probiotics seems to be a good sign that the harmful bacteria are being removed from the gut, some people might experience severe bloating, which can be very painful.

Drinking too much kombucha can also lead to excess sugar and calorie intake, which may also lead to bloating and gas.



Headaches and migraines

Fermented foods rich in probiotics – including yogurt, sauerkraut, and kimchi – naturally contain biogenic amines produced (during fermentation). Amines are created by certain bacteria to break down the amino acids in fermented foods. The most common ones found in probiotic-rich foods include histamine and tyramine.

Some people are sensitive to histamine and other amines, and may experience headaches after eating fermented foods. Because amines stimulate the central nervous system, they can increase or decrease blood flow, which can trigger headaches and migraines. One study found that low-histamine diets reduced headaches in 75% of participants. Taking a probiotic supplement might be therefore preferred.



Histamine intolerance

Histamine is plentiful in fermented foods. For most, our body's specific enzymes will naturally digest them. However, some people don't produce enough of these enzymes. This means histamine won't be digested and will instead be absorbed into the bloodstream.

This can cause a range of histamine intolerance symptoms. The most common are itching, headaches or migraines, runny nose (rhinitis), eye redness, fatigue, hives, and digestive symptoms include diarrhoea, nausea, and vomiting.

However, histamine intolerance can also cause more severe symptoms, including asthma, low blood pressure, irregular heart rate, circulatory collapse, sudden psychological changes (such as anxiety, aggressiveness, dizziness, and lack of concentration), and sleep disorders.



Food-borne illness

While most fermented foods are safe, it's still possible for them to get contaminated with bacteria that can cause illness. In 2012, there was an outbreak of 89 cases of Salmonella in the US because of unpasteurised tempeh.

Two large outbreaks of Escherichia coli, were reported in South Korean schools in 2013 and 2014. They were associated with eating contaminated fermented vegetable kimchi.

In most cases, probiotics found in fermented milk products such as cheese, yogurt, and buttermilk can effectively prevent the growth of certain bacteria, such as Staphylococcus aureus and Staphylococcal enterotoxins which can cause food poisoning. But in some cases probiotics fail and bacteria can actually secrete toxins, so the product may be hazardous.

Infection from probiotics

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Antibiotic resistance

Probiotic bacteria can carry genes that confer resistance to antibiotics. These antibiotic resistance genes may pass to other bacteria found in the food chain and gastrointestinal tract via horizontal gene transfer. The most common antibiotic resistance genes carried by fermented foods are against erythromycin and tetracycline, which are used to treat respiratory infections and some sexually transmitted diseases.

Researchers found resistant probiotic strains in commercially available dietary supplements, which could mean resistance to several common types of antibiotics used to treat serious bacterial infections.

Research has also found six probiotic Bacillus strains found in food products (including kimchi, yogurt and olives) are also resistant to several antibiotics.

And, a recent Malaysian study showed probiotic Lactobacilli bacteria in kefir carry resistance to numerous antibiotics, including ampicillin, penicillin, and tetracycline. These are used to treat serious human diseases including bladder infections, pneumonia, gonorrhoea, and meningitis.

Another study also showed lactic acid bacteria found in Turkish dairy products were resistant mainly to vancomycin antibiotic, which is the drug of choice for treatment of MRSA infection.

While there are a wide variety of health benefits that can happen from consuming fermented foods, these may not work for everyone. While most people will be fine eating fermented foods, for some they could cause serious health problems.

THE LIST

TOP FOOD COMPANIES

NESTLE Vevey, Switzerland

Established 1905.

Nestlé is the largest food company in the world, producing everything from candy to baby food, frozen food, and pet food. Brands include KitKat, Nescafe, Maggi, and Nespresso.

Annual revenue (est): USD 93.4 billion.



DANONE Paris, France

Established 1919.

Yoghurt is one of its major products, with brands like Danone and Activia. It also owns bottled water brands Evian and Volvic.

Annual revenue (est): USD 30.85 billion.



PEPSICO New York, USA

Established 1965.

In addition to beverages like Pepsi, Gatorade, and Tropicana, it also owns an impressive share of the chip market with brands like Lays, Ruffles, and Fritos.

Annual revenue (est): USD 67.16 billion.



MONDELEZ Chicago, USA

Established 2012.

Produces a whole range of sweet and savoury snacks, from Cadbury and Toblerone to Oreos and Ritz crackers, just to name a few.

Annual revenue (est): USD 26 billion.



UNILEVER London, UK

Established 1929.

They produce everything from confectionery to beverages, dairy products, and pet food. Brands include kitchen staples Knorr and Hellmann's, as well as Lipton, Magnum, and Cornetto.

Annual revenue (est): USD 63.33 billion.



ASSOCIATED BRITISH FOODS London, UK

Established 1935.

It's the world's second-largest producer of sugar and baker's yeast, with food brands including Ovaltine, Dorset Cereals, and Twinings. It also owns retail brand Primark.

Annual revenue (est): USD 21.27 billion.



COCA-COLA Atlanta, USA

Established 1892.

It doesn't just produce Coca-Cola - the company owns bottled water like Dasani, as well as non-alcoholic beverages like Schweppes, A&W, Aquarius, Minute Maid, and Sprite.

Annual revenue (est): USD 37.27 billion.



GENERAL MILLS Minneapolis, USA

Established 1866.

In addition to cereals like Cheerios and Cocoa Puffs, GM also puts out supermarket DIY food like Old El Paso and Bisquick, as well as dairy products like Yoplait and Häagen-Dazé.

Annual revenue (est): USD 15.62 billion.



MARS Washington, USA

Established 1911.

Produces chocolate products like M&Ms, Milky Way, Twix, and Snickers. Its subsidiary Wm. Wrigley produces chewing gum and mints like Eclipse and Juicy Fruit.

Annual revenue (est): USD 33 billion.



KELLOGG'S Michigan, USA

Established 1906.

It dominates the breakfast cereal market with brands like Froot Loops, Rice Krispies, and Frosted Flakes. It also owns breakfast foods like Pop Tarts, Nutri-grain, and Eggo.

Annual revenue (est): USD 13.55 billion.



2 in 1 Fusion Fast Food

Fast food joints have become part and parcel of our lives in this metropolis, whether as a place to grab a quick meal or a convenient place to catch up with friends.

Despite the relative boring expectation of the types of food you normally find (think burgers, fried chicken, and pizza), fast food is actually an area with tremendous potential for new creations, especially when it comes to incorporating food from cultures around the world into new fast-food items.



Rice burgers, a staple at Mos Burger since the late 80s, remain a hit these days. However, other fast-food vendors today have gone a step further by making the "bun" portion using ramen noodles to create a truly unique dining experience. Engineered by Keizo Shimamoto, the original ramen burger from NY-based Smorgasburg consists of shoyu-glazed patty stacked between 2 generous portions of compacted, fried ramen noodles. Perhaps, this Asian twist on a western burger can also be considered a deconstructed ramen of the 21st century, although this invention isn't for the health conscious.



Sushi and burrito should not be unfamiliar to most of us, however, putting the two together does take some creativity and courage on the part of the inventors. Originated from California where there's a large community of Mexican and Japanese migrants, this snack combines the convenience of burritos with the satisfaction of sushi. This fast-food combines typical sushi ingredients like raw fish, rice, and veggies, all wrapped up in a burrito-shaped roll with sheets of nori seaweed - kind of like a poke bowl in a wrap, with the option to top it with some guacamole. The dish was said to be invented by Peter Yen in downtown San Francisco.



Cronut is the combination of an American favourite - the donut - with a French staple, the croissant. Combining a layered texture with a firm bite, the cronut resembles a tall donut made from croissant-like dough that's filled with flavoured cream, and then fried in oil. Created by pastry chef Dominique Ansel at his New York-based dessert bar, Cronuts actually take 3 days to make because the laminated dough, which is rolled with butter to form layers, needs to rest in the fridge. Despite the fact that it's not the healthiest of desserts, there are many versions of this pastry - like Cray-nut or Crodo - since the name Cronut is trademarked.



Pizzas are a favourite at university events or when hanging out with friends because they're easy to share. Going back in history, some believe that pizzas were derived from Chinese scallion pancakes brought to Italy by Marco Polo. Now you can find a fusion of both worlds with a Chinese staple inspired by Italian fillings. The "Baozza" - which was ironically conceived in China by American Alex Cree when he visited the country - encases marinara sauce, cheese, and toppings in a bun that's denser and doughier than a regular bao. Baozzas are steamed which means they contain less oil.



Tea and coffee are undisputed leaders when it comes to preferred drinks, whether it's consumed at the end of a meal, to accompany breakfast or a snack, or simply on its own (like bubble teas). Recently, the world has seen teas using coffee leaves, which has been a staple in Sumatra, Ethiopia, Jamaica, India, Java, and Sudan for centuries. With high levels of antioxidants, coffee-leaf tea has substantially less caffeine than coffee, and doesn't taste like coffee - its taste is closer to an earthy green tea. Since coffee-leaf tea isn't made with tea leaves (or Camellia sinensis), it's technically a tisane, which is the same category as rooibos and chamomile.

In conclusion, fast food need not be the same old boring items - it can be innovative and fun to eat if there's creativity and unyielding curiosity to try new things.

CRAFTS

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SHOPPING LIST

CAUTION

Chicken Tonight

By Nina Gan

FRIED CHICKEN AROUND THE WORLD

Chicken is the world's most popular meat, consumed by anyone regardless of age, ethnicity or religion. Whether you prefer your fried chicken spicy, extra crispy or bite-sized, there's a chicken out there for you. Perhaps the world loves fried chicken because there are so many different ways to marinate, season, coat, and fry it.



Southern Fried Chicken USA

The Southern US version of fried chicken is the most iconic – it's coated in the classic quartet of flour, pepper, salt and buttermilk, and then fried to a crisp in oil. From KFC to Popeyes, they're the most popular form of fried chicken: the Japanese eat KFC meals as Christmas dinner, and a 'chicken and waffle' combo meal is a Southern specialty.

Fried chicken was created in the 1800s by African American slaves who combined Scottish frying techniques with African seasoning – they used chicken as it was the only livestock they could farm. The dish soon became popular for everyone in the South, but because preparing them was a labour-intensive process, it was only eaten during special occasions like Sunday dinners after church. Fried chicken is often served with sides like Hush Puppies (deep-fried cornmeal batter), cornbread, or biscuits (bread similar to scone).



Korean Fried Chicken South Korea

Everybody loves Korean fried chicken – as a meal, *anju* or snack, often served with pickled radishes and beer. Its popularity lies in its crispiness as a result of double-frying, leaving the skin crunchier and less greasy. Prior to frying, the chicken is usually seasoned with spices, sugar, and salt.

The dish became popular in the 70s – prior to that, chicken was only stewed – which was the time when beer was introduced. In fact, chicken and beer became such a popular combo that there's a name for it: *chimaek*. Today, there are numerous *chimaek* festivals celebrated across South Korea; the idea of *chimaek* is believed to be popularised outside South Korea by the K-drama "My Love From the Stars".



Ayam goreng Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore

We're all familiar with *ayam goreng* which is popular in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. This dish ditches the heavy breading for a spicy mixture which usually consists of salt, garlic, turmeric, ground shallots, tamarind juice, galangal, and lemongrass. The chicken pieces are soaked and marinated in the mixture prior to frying, and usually already have a yellow tint courtesy of turmeric.

The chicken is often deep fried in either palm or coconut oil until golden yellow. Regional variations exist – the Javanese *ayam goreng kremes* adds crispy granules of deep-fried spiced flour, and the *ayam penyet* is basically smashed before serving. *Ayam goreng* is typically served with rice and *sambal terasi* (chilli with shrimp paste) or *sambal kecap* (chilli and shallot in sweet soy sauce) as a condiment.

Tori Karaage Japan

Tori karaage is made with bite-sized chicken marinated in a mixture of soy sauce, sake, garlic, and ginger prior to being battered and then deep-fried, creating a dish that's crispy on the outside and moist inside. The dish is available at convenience stores like Lawson or FamilyMart as a fast food item, and it's especially popular in Japanese gastropubs (*izakaya*) where it's usually paired with beer or sake.

Karaage was believed to be created in Kyushu in the 20s – it's still a famous regional specialty where you can find *karaage* variations like the chicken *nanban* and *toriten* (tempura chicken). Since it's made with small, boneless bits of chicken (most commonly thigh meat), it was popularised after WWII due to the food shortages in Japan, specifically for chicken.



Taiwanese Popcorn Chicken Taiwan

Popularly known as popcorn chicken or *yansuji* (salted fried chicken) this crispy Taiwanese snack is popular at night markets. The little bite-sized pieces of chicken are marinated in soy sauce, sugar, garlic, and rice wine, then dredged in potato starch before being deep fried; it's twice-deep fried, first in low temperature and then in high heat to add crunch. It's served with salt and pepper seasoning, garnished with deep-fried basil leaves and chillies.

Taiwan is also famous for another night market chicken treat: giant-sized *ji pai* (chicken steak) which can be as big as your face. They're made with chicken breast that's pounded flat, marinated in a sweet and salty soy sauce mixture, coated in flour and then deep-fried until crispy while remaining juicy on the inside.



Cánh Gà Chiên Nước Mắm (Fish Sauce Chicken Wings) Vietnam

These Vietnamese fish sauce-glazed chicken wings are sweet, sour, spicy, and glossy. This simple but delicious dish is very popular at every beer-serving restaurant in Vietnam. *Cánh Gà Chiên Nước Mắm* is usually served with white rice or a simple salad for a delicious meal.

The chicken is first marinated with some seasoning that contains fish sauce, brown sugar, vinegar, garlic, and black pepper, then lightly dusted in tapioca or cornstarch and deep-fried until crispy. When done, they're tossed in a sweet fish sauce glaze that includes sugar, garlic, ginger, lime juice, and chilli for that zingy flavour. Then they're usually sprinkled with shallots, chilli or fried garlic for texture. The fish sauce glaze is sometimes served as a dipping sauce instead.



Pollo Frito Central America

Pollo frito – literally "fried chicken" – is chicken that's marinated in a mixture of lemon juice, orange juice, annatto-citrus paste, and spices like garlic and oregano which gives it a tangy, earthy flavour and reddish hue. It's then battered in a cornmeal coating which gives it the crunch once it's deep-fried. Garnished with a squeeze of lime, this dish is usually served with corn tortillas alongside fried plantains or fluffy yellow rice and black beans.

Sold in *frituras* across the Dominican Republic, the popular chicken chain Pollo Campero serves its tangy, spicy fried chicken with sides like yuca fries, sweet plantains, and beans. First opened in Guatemala in the 1970s, its signature fried chicken spread like wildfire across Central America; it now has over 400 branches worldwide.



Chicken/Israeli Schnitzel Israel

The schnitzel is basically a pounded piece of meat that's breaded and deep-fried. Austrian in origin, it was brought to Israel by immigrants in the 20th century. The original schnitzel recipe used either pork (which is *treif*, or *haram*) or veal (which was expensive and hard to obtain), so the Jews adapted the dish by using chicken instead to suit their kosher diet.

While the Austrians eat schnitzel with french fries, the Israeli schnitzel is served with typical Middle Eastern dips like tahini (made from toasted sesame) or hummus (mashed chickpeas) and lemon juice. The juice was once used to mask the flavour of meat gone bad in the days before refrigeration, but the habit stuck and people still eat schnitzel with a squeeze of lemon these days.

Pollo Fritto (Tuscan Fried Chicken) Italy

While Italy isn't known for its fried chicken, this dish comes from the Jewish community of Tuscany. The chicken is first marinated in the Mediterranean flavours courtesy of garlic, lemon, olive oil, rosemary before being dredged in flour, dipped in egg batter, and flash fried until golden. Sometimes, sage, parsley, and artichoke hearts are also dipped in the same batter, flash fried and served alongside the chicken. The meal is completed with a serving of roasted potatoes, arugula salad, and shaved Parmesan.

The bright, lemony marinade is a perfect counterpoint to the rich juiciness of the fried chicken, and is often garnished with a squeeze of lemon, often accompanied by a glass of local white wine.



By Yin Loon

Meokja!

Korean dishes you see in K-dramas

FISH SAUSAGE JEON

Sausages in Korea are usually made of fish, and this nostalgic dish was a popular lunchbox staple and is sometimes served as a *baeban* (side dish). Fish sausage jeon is a classic quick dish, and is made with sausage dipped in egg and flour, then fried. It was featured in *Reply 1988*, a nostalgic drama that features a lot of classic Korean food, and *Sun-woo* (Go Kyung-pyo) was teased because of this jeon.



SUNDUBU-JJIGAE

Sundubu-jjigae is a sour-spicy soft tofu stew made with fish stock, radish, seaweed, and kimchi; sometimes, there's pork belly slices, assorted meat, and eggs. It's a great comfort food to have on rainy days or when you're feeling under the weather. The dish featured prominently in *Fraewon Class* - Park Seo-joon's character, Sae-ro-yi, enjoyed it with his father so much it was his favourite comfort food.



TTEOKBOKKI

Tteokbokki is a dish of chewy, tubular rice cakes bathed in spicy gochujang sauce and it's a popular street food in Korea. Once a dish for royals, a simplified version was created in the 1950s in Sindang, and today the area is known as "Tteokbokki Town" where you can get a variety of *tteokbokki*. This dish is mentioned in a lot of dramas, from *Extraordinary You* to *The Heirs*, which featured a *tteokbokki* restaurant that was symbolic to one of the characters.



BUNGEOPPANG

Sold from street carts, *bungeoppang* is a fish-shaped pastry filled with sweet red bean paste (sometimes custard or other flavours) that's popular in winter. Adapted from Japanese *zaiyaki*, it was introduced to Korea in the 1930s and has seen a resurgence with a *bungeoppang* map marking the stalls' locations with brief reviews. *Bungeoppang* was featured in many dramas, like *Legend of the Blue Sea*, *Welcome to Waikiki 2*, and *Please Don't Date Him*, to name a few.



JAJANGMYEON

Jajangmyeon is a thick noodle dish bathed in signature *chunjang* (black bean sauce), and will often leave your teeth black. In Korea, this dish is often consumed on Black Day by singles who didn't receive presents for Valentine's and White Day. They would gather and 'commiserate' over all things black, including food. *Jajangmyeon* is featured prominently in the drama *Coffee Prince* where Eun-Chan (Yoon Eun-hye) proves how much of it she can eat.

SAMGYETANG

Samgyetang (ginseng chicken) is a traditional Korean soup containing a whole young chicken, with garlic, rice, jujube, and ginseng. It's a popular stamina food traditionally eaten during summer, because for Koreans, eating the hot soup is "fighting heat with heat." In *Descendants of the Sun*, Shi-Jin (Song Joong-ki) and Dae-young (Jin Goo) are seen preparing *samgyetang* for their girlfriends - thanks to the show, sales of ginseng skyrocketed!



JJAPAGURI

Jjapaguri, or *ram-don*, is a combination of two different Korean instant noodles: "Jjapaggetti" and "Neoguri." *Jjapaggetti* is an instant *jajangmyeon*, and *Neoguri* is a spicy *udon* dish, so the combination makes it savoury-sweet and spicy. The Oscar-winning film *Parasite* was probably responsible for introducing the world to this dish - in the film, King Chung Sook (Jang Hye-jin) hastily prepared the dish, served with premium beef steak.



BY YIN LOON

LUSO FOOD

PORTUGAL'S INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD'S DISHES

When we think of Western culinary influences, we tend to think French or Italian. But the Portuguese have been more instrumental in influencing cuisines around the world than you think - this is because back in the 15th century, the Portuguese were big time explorers who sailed the world, from South America to Africa and the Far East in search of spices and gold. They had staked claims from Macau to Brazil and Africa, and left their culinary influences wherever they travelled.

They introduced African coffee bushes to Brazil, and Brazilian peppers to Africa. They also brought their cooking styles to Goa, Singapore, Japan, and beyond. Here are some dishes around the world that are influenced by the Portuguese.

TEMPURA, JAPAN

While we think of tempura as a Japanese dish, it was actually introduced by the Portuguese in Nagasaki in the 16th century. Before they left in 1639 after nearly a century there, the Portuguese left behind the recipe for *peixinhos da horta*, a battered and fried green bean dish which is normally consumed when Catholics go meatless. The name "tempura" comes from *quatuor anni tempora*, referring to the Ember Days of meatless fasting. The Japanese later adapted the recipe to include other vegetables and seafood, and the rest is history.

VINDALOO, INDIA

When the Portuguese turned up in Goa during the 15th century, they brought with them their garlicky, wine-spiked pork dish called *carne de vinha d'alhos*. However, they had to adapt the dish using local ingredients, so they replaced the wine with locally-fermented palm wine, and added local ingredients like tamarind, black pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, and most importantly, with chile peppers the Portuguese brought with them from the Americas. The word *vindaloo* was adapted from *vin-d'alho*, meaning "wine and garlic".

MINCHI, MACAU

Macanese cuisine is the ultimate fusion cuisine, born in the 15th century from the need to recreate Portuguese dishes using local, available ingredients. One of the most iconic Macanese dishes is *minchi* - a stir-fry mixture of cheap cuts of minced meat (beef or pork) in soy sauce served with cubed fried potatoes and plain rice (with egg on top). It blends Cantonese flavours with the minced meat and fried potatoes of Portuguese origin. *Minchi* comes from the English word "minced," indicating the Anglophone influence of Hong Kong.

DEVIL'S CURRY, MALAYSIA & SINGAPORE

The Portuguese left a colourful mark in the Singapore culinary scene, most notably in Eurasian food - a fusion of the European and Malays or Chinese cuisine that's imbued with a lot of spice. A famous staple is the spicy stew called *debal*, or Devil's Curry, which was created by Portuguese traders in Malacca who made use of spices they could find and added heat. *Debal* means "leftovers" in the local *Kristang* language, and it was once a luxury dish reserved for Christmas time as it was made from the holiday leftovers. In Singapore, the dish is pork-based.

FEIJOADA, BRAZIL

Brazil's national dish is the *feijoada*, a stew containing beans and all kinds of pork and beef (like off-cuts and sausages), which is influenced by the Portuguese. Its name comes from *feijao* which is Portuguese for "beans", and is adapted from the Portuguese *cassoulet* using Brazilian ingredients like beans. There are variants of *feijoada* found across Brazil as well as in other former Portuguese colonies - along the African coast, fish is used instead of meat, and in Timor Leste, kidney beans, pigs ears and feet, and papaya leaves are added.

PIRI PIRI CHICKEN, MOZAMBIQUE

During the 15th century, the biggest culinary influence the Portuguese brought with them to Mozambique was the invention of *piri-piri*, a spicy sauce we all associate with Nando's. The main ingredient is the African bird's eye chilli, along with lemon, garlic, vinegar, and paprika for flavouring. *Piri-piri* sauce is used as a baste for everything from steak to seafood, and is also commonly used in their staple roast chicken dish called *galinha assada*, which is roasted over open fires and seasoned with *piri-piri* sauce before being cooked.

TEMPURA



VINDALOO



MINCHI



DEVIL'S CURRY



FEIJOADA



PIRI PIRI CHICKEN



Food in Fiction

EATING BETWEEN THE LINES



When was the last time you read a book that made you hungry, or crave a certain morsel? Literature is not just about thrilling plots, heart-tugging drama, or mind-boggling mystery – food too can play a starring role, serving as a cultural identity or a point of nostalgia. In “Joy Luck Club” (Amy Tan), we see dumplings, noodles, and oranges transformed into tokens of good luck, fortune, and well-being. In “Babette’s Feast” (Karen Blixen), pious villagers rediscover their sense of taste after they’re treated to a feast prepared by a renowned chef. In “Eat, Pray, Love” (Elizabeth Gilbert), Elizabeth travels from Italy to India and Bali in search of delicious bounty after finding herself at the crossroads of life.

When exceptional culinary and literary artistry combine, the results are satisfying in more ways than one. Here are some literary works in which food plays a starring role.

LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE

by Laura Esquivel (1993)

The novel is set in turn-of-the-century Mexico. Tita, the youngest of three daughters, is forbidden to marry as it’s her duty to care for her mother in old age. Things get weird when she and Pedro fall in love – he marries Tita’s sister just so they can be together. Written in 12 monthly installments, each chapter contains a recipe Tita makes to tie the story together, filling the pages with the tastes and aromas of Mexican cooking amidst the tale of Tita and Pedro’s unconsummated passion.

THE COINCIDENCE OF COCONUT CAKE

by Amy E. Reichert (2015)

Set in Milwaukee, this is a romantic novel about Lou, a chef with a struggling French restaurant, and a food critic named Al whose scathing review may just bring down her restaurant. The two unknowingly cross paths at a pub and become travel companions as they explore the city’s local delicacies (and their mutual attraction). While it’s a love story, the book is more like a love letter to Milwaukee – it focuses on the sights, sounds, and of course, the foods of the city.

NATALIE TAN’S BOOK OF LUCK & FORTUNE

by Roselle Lim (2019)

When Natalie Tan returns home to Chinatown upon the loss of her estranged mother, she’s surprised to learn that her neighbourhood has lost its lustre, and that she’s inherited her late grandmother’s restaurant. According to a soothsayer, she must cook three recipes from her grandmother’s cookbook to help her neighbours and the restaurant return to glory. Each recipe in the book is filled with an intention of peace, love, and luck, and Natalie’s description of what she eats or cooks – the aromas, textures, and flavours – engages all your senses.

THE HUNDRED-FOOT JOURNEY

by Richard C. Morais (2008)

Hassan Haji is an unlikely gourmand who recounts his life’s journey from Mumbai to France. As a boy, his life was coloured by his love of food, but a tragedy forced his family out of India and into a small village in the French Alps. There, the family set up an Indian restaurant opposite an esteemed French relais, and a food war erupts. The book describes the cooking, preparation, and ingredients of both Indian and French cuisine in detail, highlighting that food can create and close the gulf between different cultures.

THE KITCHEN DAUGHTER

by Jael McHenry (2011)

Ginny Selvaggio is a 26-year-old with Asperger’s Syndrome whose parents have died in an accident. Cooking is her stress outlet – one day while cooking her grandmother’s bread soup recipe, Ginny inadvertently summons her ghost. She realises she can summon ghosts of recipe authors whenever she cooks, but she only has a short time with each of them, as they vanish once the dishes’ aroma wafts away. Using food as a conduit to the dead, the book features a multitude of recipes and interesting personalities she meets along the way.

KOREAN TIPPLE

GUIDE TO ITS ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Most of us are probably familiar with Korean tipplers like *makgeolli* and *soju*, but there’s so many more types of booze from the land of K-drama. With the exception of *makgeolli* and beer, alcoholic drinks are commonly served in small shot-sized glasses, and in Korea, it’s customary to order some *anju* – food designed to be paired with alcoholic beverages – when drinking.

1. SOJU (소주)

Soju is a popular social lubricant, often drunk neat when dining on barbecued meat or spicy soup. Another popular way to drink it is with beer – a small shot of *soju* is dropped in a glass of beer, effectively making it a cocktail called ‘*somaek*’.

To many first-time drinkers, *soju* tends to have a very ‘alcoholic’ flavour even at 19-25% abv (vodka is 40%; wine is 12%). Unlike vodka, *soju* is slightly sweet and the taste can vary considerably – original *soju* is distilled primarily from rice, but these days, starches like sweet potatoes are commonly added.

In recent years, flavoured *soju* (lemon, peach, grapefruit, etc) has become mainstream. You can easily find brands like Chamisul (Jinro) and Chum Churum (Lotte) at Korean restaurants in Singapore, and luxury *soju* brands from the city of Andong (abv 20-40%) at Korean supermarkets.

5. MAKGEOLLI (막걸리)

This slightly carbonated milky sweet-tangy tippie is actually Korea’s oldest alcoholic drink, and also the nation’s favourite tippie for when it’s raining (locals often drink *makgeolli* with *pajeon*, or scallion pancake). They’re traditionally served from a clay bowl with a ladle, or poured from brass kettles.

Makgeolli (also known as *takju* and *nongju*) is a close cousin of Japan’s *nigorizake* (a cloudy sake) – both are made from rice and brewed (like beer). The major difference is the abv: *nigorizake*’s can be as high as 20%; *makgeolli* is watered down to about 6%.

The drink is purported to be healthy as it’s low in calories (46 kcal per 100ml) and contains amino acids, vitamins B and C, dietary fibre, and lactic acid bacteria (probiotic) for intestinal health. You can also find *makgeolli* flavoured with fruits or honey.

2. CHEONGJU (청주)

Cheongju (meaning ‘clear liquor’) is basically the clear liquor residue that’s left after straining *makgeolli*. As it’s undergone several fermentation stages, it tastes like a mild, slightly sweet sake with a similar abv (14%). *Chungha* is a popular brand with its crisp and almost savoury taste.

It’s an ancient beverage that was once enjoyed on the royal court – the remaining milky part of the *makgeolli* was drunk by the commoners. Today, *cheongju* is often used in a variety of traditional rituals like *Jesa* (to celebrate *Chuseok*, which is similar to *Qing Ming*). It’s also used in cooking.

There are plenty of variants. *Baekhaju* (백하주) is brewed with glutinous rice and *heukmeeju* (흑미주) uses black rice. In addition to regional variants (ie. *Cyeongju*’s *beopju*), there are different flavours like *gukhwaju* (chrysanthemum) and *insamju* (ginseng).

3. GWASILJU (과실주)

You may have seen purple bottles of *bokbunja* around, which is made with Korean black raspberry and best paired with seafood dishes. There’s also *meoruju* which is made with Korean grapes. Both are categorised as *gwasilju* – fruit-based liquor usually made from naturally fermented fruits.

Some *gwasilju* are made by mixing fruits and sugars with alcohol to bring out the fragrant, fruity flavours – like they do with the sweet plum liquor, *maesilju*, which is like the Japanese *umeshu*. With their sweet taste, *gwasilju* may be easy to drink, but beware of the 12-19% abv!

4. YAGYONGJU (약용주)

Yagyongju is considered a medicinal drink, produced by combining seeds, herbs, and roots with alcohol. However, with an average abv of 14%, they’re generally consumed more for recreation than their medicinal properties.

Popular forms of *yagyongju* include *Sansachun*, a slightly tangy drink brewed from hawthorn berries, and *Baekseju* which is a gold-coloured rice wine infused with 12 herbs.

Note: ABV refers to the alcoholic content.



BY NINA GAN

FINGER LICKIN' GOOD SEX STILL SELLS FOOD

Using sex to sell is a recipe as old as time - it's been used to hawk everything from cars to jeans. Even in Singapore, we're no stranger to seeing sex utilised to sell food. In Marigold yoghurt's "Simply Irresistible" commercial, the lady is seducing the man by eating the yoghurt seductively. Fast food brand Carl's Jr titillated audiences with their sexually-charged posters baring taglines like "Everybody Loves Big Breasts" while Burger King had their "It'll Blow Your Mind Away" tagline accompanied by an image of a what's implied to be a sex doll and their "Super Seven Incher".

Fast forward to 2020, and fast food brands have somehow continued the trend with their not-so-suggestive ads.

CUP NOODLES HONG KONG

In Hong Kong, Cup Noodles themed their sexually-charged commercial with a trending topic in their country: the Covid-19 spread at elite tai tai dance clubs.

In late November, Hong Kong had their fourth wave of Covid-19 cases, sparked by "tai tai dance clubs" where rich, well-dressed middle-aged tai tais (Ladies of leisure) dance with their obviously younger male companions who're dressed in tightly fitted shirts. More than 600 cases have been linked to these clubs.

These ladies are no stranger to dropping serious money - many of these men are paid handsomely, and according to local media, illegally ferried into Hong Kong from mainland China - for their lessons and company.

The commercial Cup Noodles created was posted on their Facebook page, featuring a tai tai hanging out with her younger, muscular male dancer who's clad in just an apron. Shot in what looks like a nightclub with cosplay maids, he prepares her Cup Noodles and feeds her. What's cringe is the fact that every bite she takes is a little too close to his body - in one shot she's practically eating from his raised armpit!

The ad would have you believe that she's trying to seduce her beefy dancer, but she's just going for the Mushroom Seafood Chowder Cup Noodles. At the end, she abandons her muscled dancer altogether, in favour of the noodles. The tagline is about 'mushrooms over muscles' - "Cos such hard work still can't beat the charm of Cup Noodles".



KFC LIFETIME MINI MOVIE

Rather than rejecting the hunk, KFC is trying to make a sex icon out of Colonel Sanders - never mind that he's old enough to be your grandfather. Last year, KFC portrayed a sexy, white-haired Sanders in a Japanese-style otome dating sim game called "I Love You, Colonel Sanders: A Finger Lickin' Good Dating Simulator" where players are cooking school students who have to win Sanders' favours.

This year, KFC is targeting soap opera lovers with their release of a steamy "mini-movie" called "A Recipe for Seduction" on US-based drama channel, Lifetime. "Recipe" focuses more on dysfunctional families, suspense, and forbidden love than it does KFC's 11 secret herbs and spices, although spice is the flavour here.

This 15-minute movie is about Jessica, a well-to-do young woman who's expected to marry the wealthy Billy, but she's actually in love with her family's cook - a sexy, middle-aged Harland Sanders, played by Mario Lopez. Jessica rejects Billy's proposal in favour of Harland, who plans to use his "secret recipe" to change the world.

Obviously, there are plot twists: one being that Jessica's mother is having an affair with Billy even as she's scheming to force Jessica to marry him (gasp). Throw in a kidnap-and-torture scene and multiple threats of murder, and you've got a perfect recipe for a daytime soap opera. The final scene ends on a troubling cliffhanger, suggesting the possibility of a sequel.

SEX SYMBOLS WILL ENDURE THE TEST OF TIME

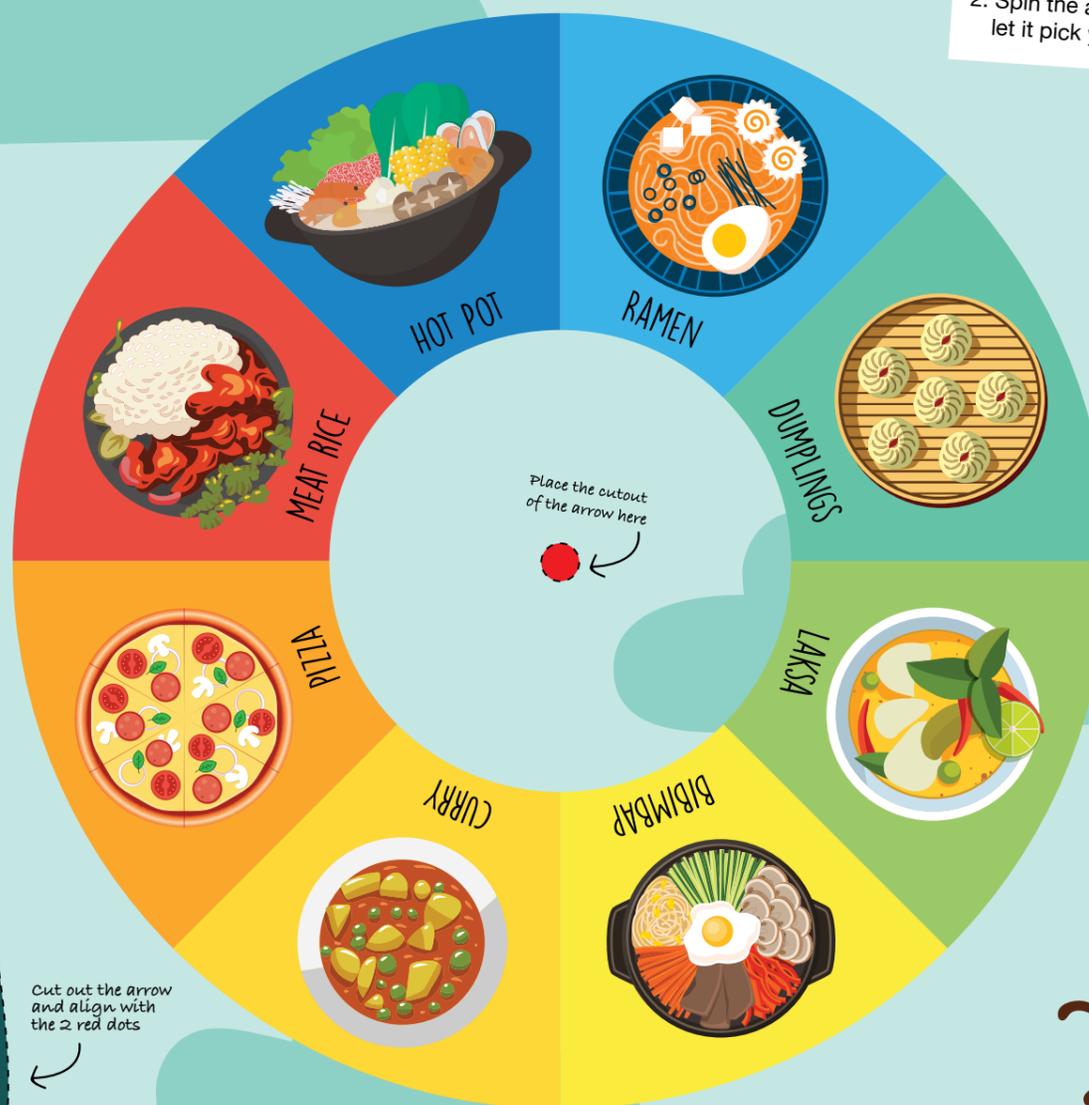
At the end of the day, whether you prefer mushrooms to muscles, or a hunky cook over a wealthy heir, the basis for these commercials is sexual in nature. It's a form of titillation that feels like a guilty sin, but grabs eyeballs for humour and derring-do. This idea of using sex to sell anything has been around since forever, and it'll still be here for a long time to come.

STRESS RELIEF

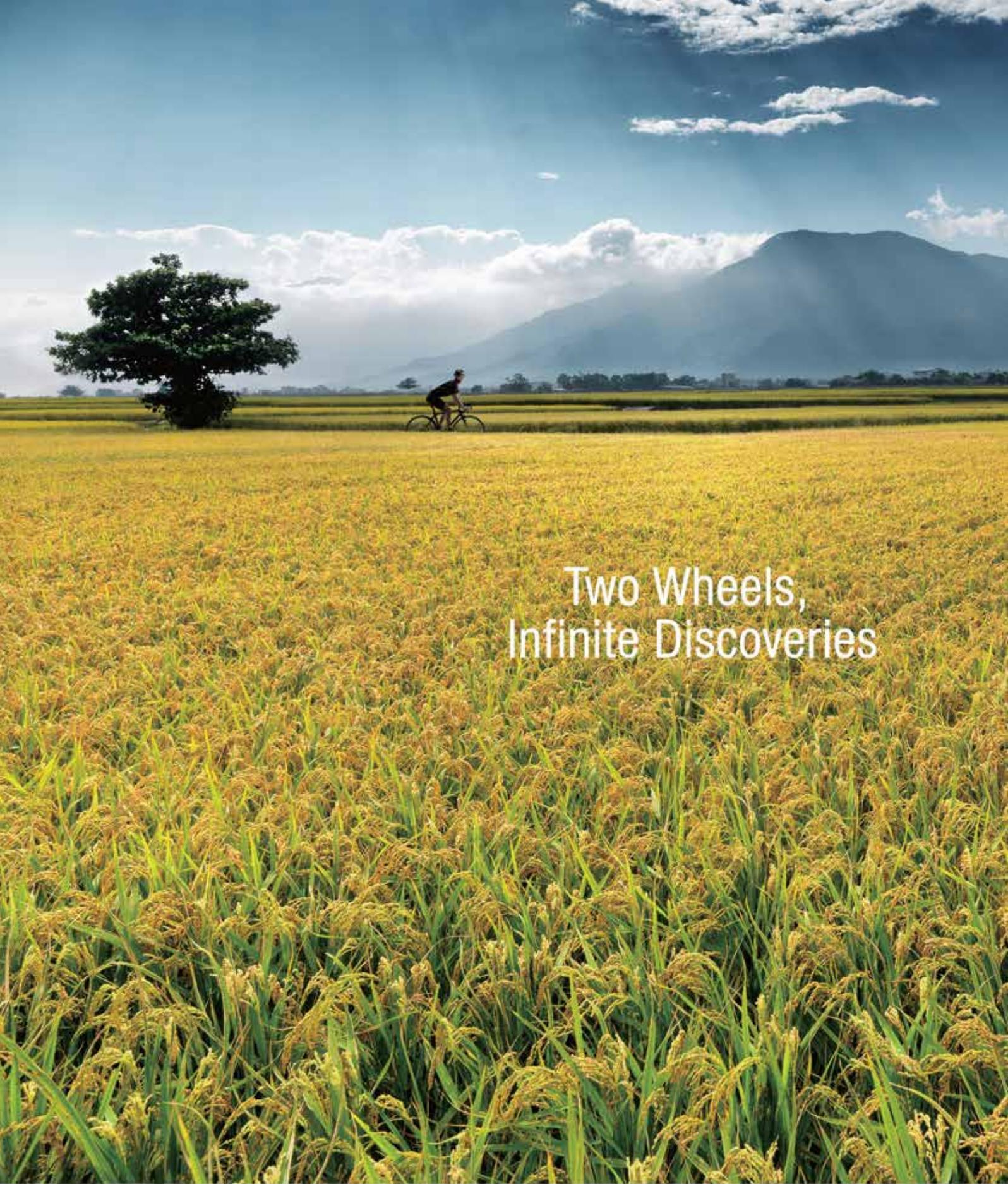
One of the most frequently-asked questions is no doubt "what do you want to eat?" - it's one that pops up just before lunch and dinner. Sometimes, this question can be a source of stress or tension, especially when you're trying to decide among friends or family. This is where this little game comes in - leave the choice to chance!

WHAT TO EAT? SPIN THE WHEEL TO CHOOSE

1. Place the arrow in the middle of the circle, and secure it with a pin or pen.
2. Spin the arrow and let it pick your food!



Cut out the arrow and align with the 2 red dots



Two Wheels, Infinite Discoveries

How far can two wheels take me?
How many valleys passed, how many kilometers traveled,
How many friendly smiles met...how many memories made?
From coastline to tree line...surf to snow...wetlands to highlands...
So much inspiring beauty and challenging terrain.
I found it all...cycling in Taiwan!

Stunning Beauty at Every Turn

Taiwan

THE HEART OF ASIA