

Pilau talk

We reveal the nutritional content of a takeaway and how you can make a healthier choice

At some point this summer, many of us will order a takeaway and watch some of the sport on TV, such as the Olympics. But how many of us will know what we're eating in that takeaway?

Did you know, for example, that a single Indian takeaway can contain more saturated fat and a Chinese meal more sugar than you should eat in a whole day?

Finding out facts such as these is quite difficult for consumers. Takeaways aren't legally required to give you any information about the nutritional content of their food.

You might expect this of small independents, but even the biggest chains don't have to provide such data.

However, some pizza chains do have information on their websites, though not at the point of sale.

So we decided to find out about nutritional content for you. We tested Chinese, Indian and pizza takeaways to see how many calories and how much sugar, fat, saturated fat and salt they contained. We then compared the results with details given on the packaging of equivalent supermarket meals.

Our findings

You can see our detailed findings by type of meal over the next few pages, but overall we found:

- Healthy options weren't always obvious.
- The same meal cooked by different takeaways or sold by different supermarkets varied widely in nutritional content. This applied particularly to the Indian and Chinese takeaways. These tend to be independent outlets that use their own recipes.
- The fat content in pizzas from chain outlets was sometimes quite different from the information on their website (see p47 for more).
- Supermarket meals cost more than 50% less than the takeaway versions. On average, they also had slightly fewer calories per portion (see 'Our research', p46, for an

explanation of the portion sizes that we used). But our taste test suggests that what you save in money and calories you may sometimes lose in taste (see opposite).

Other issues

Trans fats, also known as hydrogenated fat, are added to food to increase shelf life, but they increase blood cholesterol and the risk of heart disease. It's recommended that they should make up no more than 2% of the calories you eat. For someone on 2,000 kcals a day, this is 5g of trans fats. There were trans fats in our takeaways, but not more than 1.5g in our portions.

The six supermarkets that we looked at say they don't use trans fats in any of their ready meals.

Conclusion

Many of you will enjoy a takeaway this summer, and we would not want to suggest that you deny yourself this treat.

But we think you have the right to more information about what you are eating. We believe that takeaway menus should be better labelled. They could, for example, show low-calorie or low-salt dishes.

Some pizza chains already give nutritional information on their websites, which is welcome, but we think that this information should also be available at the point of sale.

Interestingly, there have been moves in New York to make restaurant chains with more than 15 branches display the calorie contents of the food on offer on menus, boards or by the food itself.

In March, Yo! Sushi became the first restaurant chain in this country to label its dishes according to the Food Standards Agency's traffic lights system (see 'Understanding food labels', p46), which helps you identify which foods are high in fat, sugar and salt.

Yo! Sushi sets a good example for the whole restaurant and takeaway industry. And it is only fair that we should be given more information about the food we eat.



Indian

Takeaways versus supermarket meals

We bought chicken tikka masala, pilau rice and a plain naan – one of the most popular meals.

Takeaways

- On average, the takeaways had more calories a portion than the supermarket versions, but less salt (especially the naan and pilau rice).
 - Naan bread contained more calories, weight for weight, than chicken tikka masala.
 - Pilau rice had a similar number of calories weight for weight as the chicken tikka masala.
- You might think bread and rice are healthier than the masala, but



the problem is how they're cooked. Pilau rice is fried and naan has a thick layer of butter on it.

- Half the takeaway meals had more saturated fat per Which? portion (pictured above) than a woman should eat in a day.

Supermarket meals

None of these stood out as significantly healthier or less healthy than the others.

For example, Asda's meal had the most saturated fat and sugar.

Waitrose's pilau rice contained more than five





TAKEAWAY TASTE TEST

James Norman 22, student, London

Students famously love takeaways, so it was no surprise when James (far right in our picture) agreed to take part in our taste test to see if he and three friends could tell the difference between supermarket and takeaway meals.

James eats Indian takeaways and supermarket pizzas twice a month, and tops up his takeaway taste buds with a Thai or a Chinese.

We asked the friends to rate the same dish from takeaways and Waitrose (Which? members' favourite supermarket) for taste and appearance,

and to say which they liked best. Our testers could really taste the different spices in the Indian takeaway meal while the supermarket choice was 'bland' in comparison.

They thought the supermarket Chinese looked less greasy than the takeaway version, but they were split on which tasted better.

The takeaway pizza beat its supermarket equivalent, which was judged a 'bit stingy on toppings'.

In each case, our tasters were able to tell whether the meal was from a takeaway or a supermarket.

| | Takeaway meal (average) ^a | Supermarket meal (average) ^b |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Calories (kcal) | 1,338 | 1,118 |
| Sugar (g) | 23.8 | 18.5 |
| Total fat (g) | 55.5 | 43.1 |
| Saturated fat (g) | 23.2 | 12.6 |
| Salt (g) | 3.6 | 4.5 |
| Cost | £10.80^c | £4.75^c |

^a average of the takeaways we tested ^b average according to food labels
^c actual costs for meals as purchased, portion sizes may vary

times the fat of the Tesco version (which had the least), and M&S's chicken tikka masala had more salt than other supermarket versions.



GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNTS



Men



Women

TOTAL CALORIES (kcal)
2,500

2,000

SUGAR (g)
120

90

TOTAL FAT (g)
95

70

SATURATED FAT (g)
30

20

SALT (g)
6

6

Kcals are a measure of how many calories there are in food. The calorie totals given here are averages based on an 11st 10lb man and a 9st 7lb woman. The figures for sugar, total fat, saturated fat and salt are the maximum an adult should eat.

Checklist

Have a healthier takeaway



Indian and Chinese

- Avoid deep-fried dishes, such as battered food, prawn toast, samosas and spring rolls.
- Choose tandoori, steamed and stir-fried dishes.
- Go for curries with tomato and onion-based sauces, such as jalfrezi, instead of creamy sauces, such as kormas.
- Choose boiled or steamed rice over pilau or egg-fried rice.
- Choose a chapatti instead of naan bread.
- Include side dishes of vegetables and/or dhal (lentils).
- Go easy on the free extras, such as prawn crackers, poppadoms and sauces.



Pizzas

- Avoid stuffed-crust pizzas.
- Choose veggie toppings instead of extra cheese or meat to limit fat and salt intake.
- Share a pizza with a friend and have a salad (not potato salad or coleslaw) on the side, and watch out for dressings.



Chinese

A sweet or sour story?

Takeaways

We ordered a portion of sweet-and-sour chicken, egg-fried rice and a portion of vegetable spring rolls. Where available, the sweet-and-sour chicken was unbattered.

Chinese takeaways are the most popular type of takeaway ordered in the UK.

This meal contained much less saturated fat than the Indian takeaway, so it might seem a healthier option. However, it contained nearly three times as much sugar. For example, one of the meals contained over 19 teaspoons (96g).

Three of the takeaway meals contained as much fat as a woman should eat in a day.

On average, the takeaway meals had more calories per Which? portion

(shown above) than supermarket versions.

Supermarket versions

M&S's and Morrisons' sweet-and-sour chicken are battered and, therefore, have the highest total fat, saturated fat and salt of all the supermarket versions of the dish.

Tesco's vegetable spring rolls had the highest saturated fat content, nearly five times that of the M&S version, which had the lowest of all the supermarkets.

Weight for weight, all the supermarket egg-fried rice had more calories than the sweet-and-sour chicken it accompanied.



| | Takeaway meal (average) ^a | Supermarket meal (average) ^b |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Calories (kcal) | 1,436 | 993 |
| Sugar (g) | 62 | 47.4 |
| Total fat (g) | 60.4 | 30.6 |
| Saturated fat (g) | 9.3 | 6.1 |
| Salt (g) | 4.7 | 4.1 |
| Cost | £10 ^c | £4 ^c |

^a average of the takeaways we tested ^b average according to food labels ^c actual costs for meals as purchased, portion sizes may vary



Understanding food labels

Checking the sugar, salt and fat levels in the food you buy

We've produced this handy cut-out-and-keep card so you can see whether the food you buy is low, medium or high in fat, sugar and salt.

It shows values per 100g, so you will be able to compare different types of food.

The card is based on information produced by the Food Standards Agency, a government body that promotes food safety.

For a healthy diet, we should limit how much fat we eat, especially saturated fat, which is the most harmful type. Saturated fat can block arteries and lead to raised cholesterol levels. We should also cut down on added sugars and salt. If you see a red light on the front of food packaging, you know it is high in a nutrient we should be trying to cut down on. Amber means the food isn't high or low

in that nutrient, so it's an OK choice most of the time. Green means the food is low in that nutrient. The more green lights, the healthier the choice, according to the Food Standards Agency. Visit www.which.co.uk/foodshopping for more.



OUR RESEARCH

We tested how many calories and how much sugar, fat, saturated fat and salt there is in Chinese, Indian and pizza takeaways. We checked the details given on standard supermarket versions of the meals, which were bought from Asda, M&S, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

Indian and Chinese food

We ordered meals from 10 Chinese and 10 Indian takeaways within a two-mile radius of our office that offered a delivery service.

Our Indian meal was chicken tikka masala, pilau rice and a plain naan. Our Chinese meal was sweet-and-sour chicken, egg-fried rice and a portion of vegetable spring rolls.

As takeaway portions tend to be bigger than supermarket versions, we created a standard Which? meal to compare the two. For the Indian and Chinese meals this was a 350g meat dish, 200g of rice and 100g of naan or spring rolls. Typically, the Indian takeaways served an individual portion of 400g meat, 300g rice and 200g naan. An average supermarket portion for one was 280g meat, 204g rice and 108g naan. Chinese takeaways had a typical individual portion of 400g meat, 250g rice and 150g spring rolls. A supermarket portion for one averaged out at 230g meat, 220g rice and 98g spring rolls.

Pizzas

We tested medium thick-crust cheese and tomato pizzas and medium thin-crust pepperoni pizzas from Domino's Pizza, Perfect Pizza and Pizza Hut. A typical takeaway cheese and tomato pizza was 600g, and the supermarket one 425g. A typical takeaway pepperoni pizza was 450g, the supermarket one 300g. We used a standard 300g Which? portion.

Find out more

Food Standards Agency www.eatwell.gov.uk

Domino's www.dominos.co.uk

Pizza Hut www.pizzahut.co.uk

EXERCISE

A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips, the saying goes. But if do you succumb to the temptations of a takeaway, how much exercise will it take to burn it off? Figures are for a Which? portion used in our testing

Indian (1,338 calories)



Chinese (1,436 calories)



Pizza (929 calories)



^a Figures shown are for a man weighing 11st 10lb and a woman weighing 9st 7lb

Pizza

How can you find out what nutrients are in a pizza?

We ordered medium thick-crust cheese and tomato and medium thin-crust pepperoni pizzas. Pizza chains recommend a medium pizza for one to two people. If you share this equally, a portion is about 300g which is, on average, the same as a whole standard supermarket pizza.

Our results show that, on average per portion, the supermarket pizzas have fewer calories than the takeaway ones.

Pepperoni increases the fat, saturated fat and salt content of your pizza. A 300g portion of takeaway pizza (see picture, far right) contains more saturated fat than a woman should eat in a day, and more than two thirds the salt that an adult should have. Pizzas from different chains contained similar calories.

Asda's Deep Pan Cheese Feast was one of the largest supermarket pizzas, weighing 460g. The label gives values per half pizza, assuming you'll share it. But sometimes we eat what's in front of us, not what we're meant to. Eat this whole pizza and that's 1,311 calories, 26.2g saturated fat and 5.5g salt – close to the guideline daily amounts for men.

Reaction

Domino's and Pizza Hut give nutritional details on their websites. We



| | Takeaway thick crust cheese and tomato pizza (average) ^a | Supermarket thick crust cheese and tomato pizza (average) ^b | Takeaway thin crust pepperoni pizza (average) ^a | Supermarket thin crust pepperoni pizza (average) ^c |
|-------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Calories (kcal) | 836 | 752 | 929 | 846 |
| Sugar (g) | 8.5 | 8.9 | 8.2 | 10.9 |
| Total fat (g) | 31.5 | 28.0 | 48.3 | 38.2 |
| Saturated fat (g) | 15.5 | 13.6 | 22.5 | 16.6 |
| Salt (g) | 3.3 | 3.1 | 4.4 | 4.2 |
| Cost | £7.65 ^d | £2.70 ^d | £10.75 ^d | £2.80 ^d |

^a average of pizzas tested ^b average according to labels (excludes Morrisons) ^c average according to labels ^d costs for pizzas as bought, portion sizes may vary

compared our results with the information given.

The four Domino's cheese and tomato pizzas we tested had at least 50% more fat per 100g than the website stated. The pizzas are handmade, so we would expect some variation between the figures, but not this much. Our test showed no problems with their sugar and salt values. There is no data on

Domino's website for its thin-crust pepperoni pizza.

A spokesman said: 'We regularly monitor pizza mak-

ing in all of our stores and have never seen variances of the size that you report.'

The company said it takes the allegations very seriously and will re-test all its pizzas and update its food guide. The difference between Pizza Hut pizzas and information on its website wasn't significant. Perfect Pizza had no nutritional details on its website, but is to add this in future.

