

In A Bite with Charlotte Mei

Tidbits - Hawker food Q&A; consequences of moralising food
Full Transcript

Charlotte 00:04

Hey there. It's Charlotte Mei, reporting from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, coming through with another Q&A episode and a title change. If you've not noticed, these episodes have been renamed from the previous title of just Q&A. They will now be called Tidbits. Now, this is because they're not only shorter episodes, but they will also contain small nuggets of information that don't necessarily relate to the Q&A topic from the previous episode, but are still nutrition focused and may come in handy for you.

So every other week I'll dish up a main meal, and in between you'll get little snack portions like these.

Now on to the questions received this week.

I've received questions along the line of: Is X good or bad for me or is X healthy? Thing is there are no good or bad foods out there. The only bad food is those that will make you ill. And for good food... Well, it's different for different people and contexts.

And this is where I want to talk about what happens when we moralise food as being good or bad. If you've attended my nutrition workshops, this is something you probably would have heard me say many times. The main reason for us eating is to gain energy and nutrition, yes. But there are also other reasons for why we eat: pleasure, curiosity, social bonding, etc. Conversations around moralising food mostly leave us feeling poorly about ourselves because it simply creates a dichotomy which sets us up for a 50% chance of failure.

Things like good or bad, eating clean, guilt-free foods... These are words to be very careful of. And if you hear a medical professional use these words or follow anyone on social media that uses them too, I would take whatever they say with a big pinch of salt. A big pinch of raw, organic, unprocessed pink Himalayan salt!! Okay, I know I'm stretching it here, but this is something I'll be covering very soon too. Just a big pinch of salt okay!

Moralising food can create a sense of guilt when all we did was eat something out of desire. When these sorts of language is applied to food, it then gets transferred to the person eating it. And it can be very dangerous and potentially lead to disordered eating behaviours. We end up making excuses about our eating choices, feeling less capable than our peers, comparing ourselves... and the cycle of self-loathing begins.

Or we deprive ourselves, fight temptations so hard in order to be good and then end up face planting big time into a large pizza or a tub of ice cream... and sometimes in secrecy,

just because no one's watching. If you've faced any of that, you're not alone. I've been in all those situations, too.

Now, this isn't an episode about disordered eating, so I won't go too deep into it. But for now, I encourage you to acknowledge what your body wants and the reasons for why you're eating a particular food.

And three things to remember. Keep in mind the framework I mentioned in the previous episode, and be sure to get that for the majority of your meals. Remember to focus on what you can add more often to your meals rather than what you shouldn't be eating. And finally, if you had one meal where you had too little or too much of anything, just adjust accordingly in your next few meals. Nail these three things and you're already winning.

I also received another question asking for pregnancy friendly hawker food. Thing is there is no specific diet for pregnant women. However, general advice states to avoid certain things like raw or semi cooked food, liver, alcohol and caffeine.

Now for the last one. The opinion is divided on how much pregnant women can consume, if any at all. So, do you consult your doctor on this for a more individualised approach. And in terms of nutrients to look out for in particular, go for foods that are high in folic acid, calcium and iron.

Folic acid can be found in leafy greens.

Calcium can be found in tofu, fortified milk and fish like ikan bilis and sardines where the bones are eaten.

And iron can be found in pulses like lentils as well as red meat, as we all know.

And if you find yourself particularly susceptible to acid reflux, just be wary of spicy and oily foods. Now, I'm not even pregnant and I get acid reflux quite often, so I feel you there.

And aside from all of that, order food that is freshly prepared on the spot rather than those that have been sitting out for a while. Simply because pregnant women are more susceptible to food poisoning.

And one last point, because this is something I've heard about is... "cooling foods". I'm definitely doing an episode on this at some point. But for now, just a quick one on this in relation to pregnancy.

So, some say that foods such as barley, grass jelly, etc., should be avoided during pregnancy because they're cooling. Now, there is no scientific evidence that has proven that these foods would cause issues during pregnancy. So they're completely okay to eat. Prioritise a well-balanced diet with foods from all groups and you'll be good. And if there's anything you may need to look out for in particular, your gynaecologist would be the best person to advise you on this.

And that's all for me for this episode. See you next week where I'll be tackling the topic of microwaves. Is it safe to use? And how should you be using it best?

Thanks for listening to this Q&A episode of In A Bite! If you found this useful, share the link to this episode via text to a friend, or on your social media page! For more content, follow me on Instagram and TikTok [@thecharlottemei](#). And also, don't forget to subscribe to the channel and rate it on whichever platform you're listening on, so more people get to know of it too!

For the full transcript of this episode, head over to my website thecharlottemei.com/podcast.