

MAKE A HEALTHIER YU SHENG

We don't mean to break your heart, but your favourite raw fish salad is actually a sneaky calorie bomb.



Featuring an assortment of vegetables, raw fish slices and ground spices, yu sheng would be a wholesome dish... if not for these fat traps: deep-fried pillow crackers and sugar-loaded plum sauce.

According to Health Xchange, a portal by Singapore Health Services, a 387g serving of store-bought yu sheng will cost you over 500 calories. That's a whopping figure, considering that this dish is usually eaten as a starter.

The solution: Make your own yu sheng. You'll be in control of what ingredients to add, and how much. Executive chef Eric Chan of Xin Cuisine Chinese Restaurant shares five ways to cut the fat and up the nutrients.

● **Skip the pickles** They are high in preservatives and sugar. Replace them with refreshing citrus ingredients such as pomegranate, pomelo, grapefruit and yuzu. Plus, they will make your yu sheng way more colourful and Instagram-worthy!

● **Add more seeds** Besides your basic white sesame seeds, add a dose of chia, black sesame and pumpkin seeds. Chia seeds are packed with fibre that helps you to stay full longer and reduce overall cholesterol levels. Black sesame seeds have more calcium and antioxidants compared to white ones. And pumpkin seeds are filled with heart-healthy omega-3 and -6 fats.

● **Choose almonds over peanuts** Swop your crushed peanuts with crushed almonds instead. The latter have more iron and calcium, and a lower fat content. Almonds also contain vitamin E, which can give your immune system the boost it needs.

● **Replace the deep fried crackers** Instead of your "golden pillow" crackers, try using thin rice or multigrain crackers. These are usually baked and contain less fat. Crush and sprinkle them over your yu sheng to get the same satisfying crunch.

● **Make your own sauce** Forget plum sauce - it's exceedingly high in sugar, with over 6g per tablespoon. Try this fruity dressing with no added sugar or oil: Dice 350g of dragon fruit and blend with 150g of passion fruit until smooth. Place the mixture in a sterilised jar and let it ferment for a month under room temperature. Turn the jar occasionally to ensure that the ingredients are well mixed. Your guests will be impressed! **S**