

NUTRIENT PROFILE, CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND HYGIENIC HANDLING PRACTICES OF FOODS OFFERED BY THE STATE UNIVERSITY CANTEENS IN SRI LANKA

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Canteens in the state universities are the major contributor of food for the undergraduate students. Identifying issues associated with university canteen foods and services may be helpful to construct and implement appropriate strategies. Aims of the study were to evaluate the nutrient profile of foods offered by the public university canteens in Sri Lanka along with the actual contribution of canteen foods to the energy and macronutrient requirements of the students, to identify the consumer perception on foods and services offered and to investigate the appropriateness of current hygienic food handling practices of the canteen staffs.

A cross sectional study was conducted in twelve canteens from six state universities. Three hundred undergraduate students who visited these canteens during the data collection period were participated. Standard three main meals offered by the canteens were weighed to determine nutrient profile of foods. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the information on consumer perception on food and services offered by the canteens. Twenty four hour dietary recall was used to collect the actual intake of energy and macronutrients. Food handling practices checklist was used to investigate the current food handling practices followed by the university canteen staffs and operators.

Energy content of standard three main meals was around 1800 kcal. Energy contribution from carbohydrate, protein and fat were 65%, 10% and 25% respectively. Students who consumed three main meals from canteen were able to meet their energy requirement by 77%. Sixty two percentage of the students were satisfied with overall food and beverage services offered by the university canteens. Most of the university canteens were following more than 50% of the hygienic food handling practices.

In conclusion, energy content of the standard three main meals was adequate for an average student. Canteen meals were rich in carbohydrate whereas protein and fat content were aligned with recommendation. Most of the students were satisfied with overall food and services offered by university canteens. Half of the required hygienic foods handling practices were followed by the university canteens.