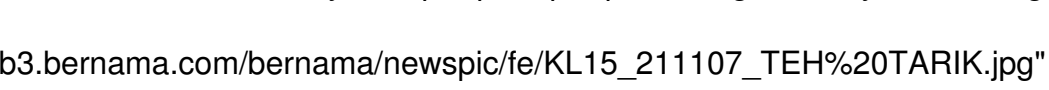


KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- In Malaysia the `teh tarik' is more than the favourite beverage, it is part of our lifestyle. For some, teh tarik has become a daily indulgence, almost a necessity. Even Wikipedia, the internet encyclopaedia, describes teh tarik as the de facto national drink of Malaysia.


INDULGENCE◆Alfean of restaurant Nasi Kandar Pelita Bangsar showing off his skill in preparing teh tarik sugar lite

However, due to its high sugar content contributed by the sugar and condensed milk, daily teh tarik consumption may prove to be a health hazard. What more when 1.2 million Malaysians are suffering from diabetes, out of which 98 percent are type 2 diabetes that requires reduction in sugar intake. The pandemic trend of diabetes continues to affect ever-increasing number of people around the world while there is an extraordinary lack of awareness on the global scale of the threat.

NEED TO PROMOTE LOW SUGAR DIET

To promote the importance of a low sugar diet, a pharmaceutical company Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) with the cooperation of Malaysian Diabetes Association has embarked on a campaign for a healthier alternative to the teh tarik, the `sugar-lite'teh tarik. The campaign was in conjunction with the World Diabetes Day on Nov 14 and part of the "Living Well With Diabetes" campaign to drive home the message on the need for increased diabetes awareness, education and prevention to Malaysians. The Managing Director of MSD Ewe Kheng Huat said while teh tarik is a very popular drink in Malaysia, its sugar content is a cause of concern.

CONTROLLING SUGAR INTAKE VITAL

Chief dietician at the Prince Court Medical Centre Datin Farah DiBa Khan said from dietary perspective, controlling our sugar intake is extremely important. Every 500 ml of regular teh tarik (about two cups) contains 278 kcal, two grams of protein, 10 grams of fat and 43.7 grams of carbohydrate while the same amount of sugar lite teh tarik contains 133 kcal, 4.4 gram of protein, five gram fat and 16.5 grams of carbohydrate, she said. However, even it is tea with less sugar, it still has to be taken in moderation, she said. Farah DiBa recommended only two cups a week, a number that is bound to disappoint the average tea drinker in the country.

Concocted by freelance chef Nicholas E. Pillai, the sugar lite teh tarik replaced condensed milk with soyamilk. It taste the same only that it's lighter. Pillai said it is important to develop a teh tarik recipe that will not only appeal to the masses but represents the healthier alternative to the original. He is confident that people will soon warm up to the taste just like the skinny cappuccino and soy cappuccino that is widely accepted now.

The sugar lite teh tarik is currently available at selected restaurants such as Devi's Corner, Nasi Kandar Pelita and Sri Nirwana Maju outlets. MSD plans to increase its restaurant partners in making the sugar lite teh tarik as part of their daily menu and will embark on mini roadshows at selected spots within Klang Valley to promote the beverage.

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