

Bername : asty Meals, But What About Hygiene?

Written by Administrator

Monday, 14 September 2009 14:32 -

The night market or "pasar malam" is a Malaysian way of life. It has become a culture to the extent that a neighbourhood would be considered dull if the area has no such market. The night bazaar is the place where many people shop for their daily essential items, including readily prepared food like the chicken rice, nasi lemak, fried noodles, traditional kuih and other delicacies. A night market tends to draw a huge crowd and the festive atmosphere dwells everytime the night market is around. One fine example is the Saturday night market at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman at the heart of the city here.

Due to traffic problems, the market has been relocated to the nearby Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman, adding to the hustle and bustle to the already busy Masjid India area. "On one occasion, I decided to go to a pasar malam. I thought of buying some chicken rice for my children but I decided against it after watching the chicken rice seller touching the roasted chicken meat with his bare hands," said Salman Salleh, a teacher. **BAD HABITS** Salman said from what he observed the food traders do not bother to wear at least a pair of transparent gloves. "The gloves are not that expensive and it give some assurance on the hygienic level of the food they are selling. Sometimes they do wear aprons, but the aprons appeared to be soiled," he said. He said the women traders would wear the tudung but the men usually left their heads uncovered instead of wearing caps.

"How to eat when you watch them (traders) blatantly using their bare fingers to touch the food?" "Don't tell me that they have taken extra precautions like washing their hands with antiseptics or the very least, soaps before handling the food. I really doubt that especially if the food handlers are immigrants," said Salman. **BRIYANI**

RICE Businessman Ming Yao agrees with Salman's views.

"I am a glutton myself but I also pay attention whether the food is hygienically prepared or the otherwise. "If the food handler shows that he does not care much about hygiene, then God knows if he really cooks the food hygienically," said Ming Yao. Ming Yao

said one day he went to a popular nasi briyani joint in Petaling Jaya and ordered for a take-away packet of the "bukhara briyani." To his horror, the food handler, who is obviously an immigrant, packed the briyani rice plus the plastic packs of dhal curry and pickle into the same lunch box. "When I asked him why he did that, his reply was that the plastic packs were clean," said Ming Yao. When Ming Yao told him that the plastic packs, even though factory-fresh, should not be with the rice, the man simply said: "Ini bersih punya, mau beli tak mau beli? (These are clean enough, you want to buy or not?).

According to Ming Yao, some Malaysians practised a rather high standard of hygiene when it comes to food preparing or handling but some others, including the immigrant food handlers are on the very opposite end of the hygienic scale.

LOCAL AUTHORITY A health department officer of a local authority, who declined to be named, said food stall traders at night markets are required to adhere to certain guidelines. "Handlers of prepared food are required to wear clean aprons and caps. They are also told to wear gloves whenever possible. They are to keep their hands clean and they must use spatulas, spoons or ladles when handling food."

The officer said the traders have to go for health checks including taking anti-cholera jabs, adding that action would be taken against those found flouting the rules. "We have officers going around to check on the state of hygiene. However we are not able to monitor all food traders," he said, adding that some of the traders only start donning aprons and caps upon realising that the health department officers are making their rounds. "After the

Bername : asty Meals, But What About Hygiene?

Written by Administrator

Monday, 14 September 2009 14:32 -

officers have gone, the traders would be back to their old habits," he said.

CHILDREN SELLING FOOD

 According to social and consumer activist Fatimah Mansur, children assisting their parents in packing the food at night markets is a common sight.

 "As you know, children do not pay much attention when it comes to touching food with their bare hands. It is up to their parents to set a good example by showing the way to good hygienic habits," she said.

 Fatimah said practising good hygienic habits must be made a way of life for all Malaysians.

 "For example, we are still far behind in keeping our public toilets clean," she said.

 She said the 'I have done my business, I don't care about others' mentality should be discarded.

 Fatimah said it would be difficult to progress towards achieving a developed nation status when some people have negative attitude towards maintaining good hygiene concept.

 "Should the people await for the authorities to declare a day for maintaining good hygiene or should we have a good hygiene awareness programme," she asked.
</div><p>
 -- BERNAMA</p><p>15 November 2007 </p>◆</div>