

Why do we like blaming the poor for what they eat?



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SEPTEMBER 5 — Malaysians eat too much, eat too badly, so blare the headlines every other month. It is frankly quite annoying to be honest.

Yes, we have high diabetes and obesity rates. It is easy to just blame the fat people and decide to make junk food and sugary foods more expensive.

It doesn't solve the fundamental problem. Nutrition is, after all, a science and only now have we realised that a lot of the things we were taught about food are flawed.

The only safe-ish thing we can consume in large quantities is vegetables but for the poor, can be a challenge to keep or buy fresh. Unless we all decide to embrace eating preserved vegetables all the time but that's a whole other consideration.

Fruits, we keep being told, are good for us and people however forget that fructose or the sugar found in fruits can be just as harmful in large quantities as table sugar.

All the fancy juices we keep getting peddled? It seems they pump too much sugar, little to no fibre and you'd be better off just eating the fruit.

The food pyramid apparently is wrong and we do not need to eat as much carbs as it represents. Yet cheap carbs such as rice are the basis of subsistence for the poor because they're filling, despite not necessarily providing enough nutrients.

It's tiring and expensive to purchase high-quality food but of course some people think the solution to that is just to make bad food expensive.

Lay your hands off my potato chips, elitists.

We forget that by nature, a lot of Malaysian food is rather unhealthy. *Nasi lemak*, *curry laksa*, even the average *roti canai* are calorie bombs with questionable nutritional value.

Our dietary habits are cultural for some, by necessity for many.

Of course the rich can afford personal trainers making them meal plans and shop at organic supermarkets. For the average poor person, it's instant noodles with maybe some cabbage thrown in and an egg.

The solution? Better education about nutrition made available to the public and not just in fancy diet books, as well as incentives to eat healthy.



In the meantime, the next person who suggests a soda tax should be required to go cultivate an imagination. Or live with a poor family's budget and realise how sometimes, soda after a long week of dealing with elitist rich people is sometimes the only only joy some poor people can afford.

*** This is the personal opinion of the columnist.**

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