

F&B

Food & Beverage

A MYANMAR TIMES SPECIAL FEATURE - JUNE 2012



A 12-page supplement on food and drinks



Start working smart...

eko

Office Solution

NatRay Co., Ltd.

email: eko-nr@myanmar.com.mm



Bld-A2 ,Gr-FI, Shwe Gabar Housing, Mindama Rd, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. ☎ 652391, 09-73108896

By Ben White

A joy of Myanmar's relaxed attitude to dining, is that it is perfectly acceptable to add such snacks to your meal when sat at another stall. You can even have foods like the dish of tiny fishcake parcels made and brought over to your table.

barely resemble each other. In Yangon, the beauty of Chinatown is the heady, sensual overload of its street life, where every inch of space is taken up by a hawker as keen to sell you their innumerable paraphernalia as the person beside them is as uninterested by your tentative enquiries to the cost of that strange looking produce.

Immersed in the chaos of Myanmar street trading, Chinatown has all too heartedly followed in concert. Everything is out on the streets. By night Yangonites flock here in search of a feast, a drink, and the chance to while away the evening hours engaged in enthusiastic banter. Street stalls open up along the

eat along with Myanmar beer on tap. Highlights are certainly the marinated pork ribs and the fish.

20th Street

Rice soup

Nestled in a side street to the side of the main Chinese temple is a popular rice soup stall. A favourite for Chinese if your feeling under the weather, but equally comforting at any time, the piping hot bowls of rice soup in chicken broth come with a choice of chicken or fish, dough sticks and chives. The also have a selection of cold dishes, chicken salad, and even 'duck blood' salad if you can stomach it – although it is actually made from black bean and not duck.

typical of Yunnan.

The heart of Chinatown is 19th street, the hugely popular and ever expanding run of barbecue and beer stalls that sits in the epicentre of all the madness. After skirting the repeated gestures by waiters encouraging you to sit at their respective tables, you get to pick from an array of barbecue skewers to

19th Street

Beer & Barbecue

Yangon benefits from a large contingent of Yunnanese among its Chinese, differing from more common Mandarin or Cantonese in other countries. And this shows with the plenty stalls selling barbecue and mala hin – fragrant, spicy vegetable and noodle dish –

花生油 香麻油



Global

PEANUT OIL



Your Choice is
Your Quality

ပဲဆီသန့်၊ နမ်းဆီမွှေး၊ ပထမထိပ်တန်းနမ်းဆီ

အထုပ်အအုံများ (၁) -

အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ ခွက်ပုံ အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ - ၂၅၀၀ - ၁၀

အထုပ်အအုံများ (၂) -

အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ ခွက်ပုံ အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ - ၂၅၀၀ - ၁၀

အထုပ်အအုံများ (၃) -

အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ ခွက်ပုံ အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ - ၂၅၀၀ - ၁၀

အထုပ်အအုံများ (၄) -

အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ ခွက်ပုံ အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ - ၂၅၀၀ - ၁၀

အထုပ်အအုံများ (၅) -

အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ ခွက်ပုံ အမှတ်(၁) - ၁၀ လီတာ - ၂၅၀၀ - ၁၀





မလေးရှားနိုင်ငံမှတ်ပုံတင် - ၁၀၂၀၀၀၀၂၇၈၈၈



mister snowice

Taiwan Snowice & Bubble Tea




Snowice

Hot Pineapple Snowice

Snowing Snowice

Tao Min Gyi Snowice

No the Nyord Snowice

To Singapore Market





Milly Strawberry Snowice



Milly Chocolate Snowice



Mango Snowice



Japanese Green Tea Snowice





Double Taste

No. 23-C, Ground Fir, Nawaday Rd, Yaw Min Gyi Qtr, Dagon Tsp, Yangon.
 Near Dagon (1) High School, Tel: 09 517 7303, 09 731 89136

Cherry Mann Latha street

Somewhat incongruously situated in the heart of Chinatown, but if you fancy something different, there is an Indian Muslim restaurant diagonally opposite the Chinese temple on Latha street. The shop serves up excellent plates of succulently spiced mutton and chick-

en along with paratha bread and dahl soup. The dishes are



a little expensive and large, which is disappointing if you like getting carried away with ordering a whole selection.

Baw Ka

No 737 Mahabandoola Road

Near the far edge of Chinatown, just before you reach Lanmadaw Road is a cute little Chinese eatery that does some of the best steam ribs in gravy, noodle soup, and especially zhongzi, triangular sticky rice parcels wrapped in banana leaf

and stuffed with pork preserved egg, Chinese sausage, dried prawns. The shop is identifiable by the hanging zhongzi at the front, and its stained white tile walls and dark wooded tables give you a genuine feeling of being in China.

18th street

And if you still feel you can find space for something sweet, a nice Chinese desert to try is silken tofu in hot, sweet ginger water. This can be found in large wooden drums by the street side along Mahabandoola Road, with a particularly good one opposite 18th street. If sweet tofu seems a bit too odd then there is an excellent yoghurt stall opposite, tucked in the side street. The perfectly tangy yoghurt comes lathered in sticky sweet jaggery syrup. ■



Pictures : Kaung Htet, Ko talk



Padonmar Restaurant

Fine Dining Myanmar & Thai Cuisine

Member Of Myanmar Restaurant Association (M R A)




Open Daily
11:00a.m. - 11:00p.m.




No.105/107, K'ha-Yae-Bin Road, Dagon T/S,
between Pyi Daung Su Yeik Tha (Halpin) and
Manawhari Road/Ahlone Road, Yangon, Myanmar.
(near The Governor's Residence)

Tel/Fax: 538 895 Tel: 09 7302 9973, 09 7310 8608
Mobile: 09 540 9469, 09 4958 8419, 09 7324 2410
Email: padonmar.restaurant@gmail.com
Website: www.myanmar-restaurantpadonmar.com
HAPPY HOURS EVERYDAY 6p.m. - 9p.m.
House Pouring Drinks only.

El Dorado

Bake House

Happy Time Happy with El Dorado



No. 4, Wai Zayan Dar Rd, Thingangyan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 565 649
No. C 2-1, 32 St, Bet: 77x78 St, Mandalay. Tel: 02 35243
www.eldoradobakehouse.com

Myaynigone

By Douglas Long

wards the goal of ingesting the daily allotment of required nutrients: Los Angeles has its Silver Lake, Paris its Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Bangkok its Thonglor, and even Sydney probably has something of the sort.

hearts of a certain kind of traveller, and evokes joy in others: utterly local, completely devoid of Famous Tourist Sights, often crowded, sometimes gritty. It's also tremendously diverse, home to a Catholic church, at least two Hindu temples, several Islamic community centres, a Sikh temple, and the usual collection of neighbourhood Buddhist pagodas and nat (spirit) shrines.

Mercifully, the streets of Myaynigone are too narrow to accommodate cyclopean tour buses, and many shops are too narrow, and their plastic seats too small, for the comfort of

EVERY world-class city has its trendy neighbourhoods, chock-full of chic clothing shops where all the hepcats and chickie-babes lay down the dough for happening threads, and likewise graced with a surfeit of stupendously "with it" eateries where "being seen" is just as important as the mastication of victuals to-



Yangon, not being a world-class city, has no such thing. It will likely take a few years before the city reaches the cosmopolitan heights of other emerging hotbeds of neo-cultural excitation in Asia, such as Shanghai, Singapore and Nay Pyi Taw.

In the meantime, Yangon has Myaynigone ward in Sanchaung township, a roughly triangle-shaped area bordered on the west by Pyay Road, the east by U Wisara Road, the north by Hanthawaddy roundabout (where Pyay and U Wisara meet at a point) and the south by Dhammazed Road.

This is the kind of neighbourhood that strikes fear into the

the endomorphs who can often be seen disembarking en masse from the aforementioned modes of conveyance.

As far as food goes, Myaynigone is not the right destination if you are looking for burgers, pizza or gourmet French food. It is, however, a great place to walk around and sample local fare. There are a huge number of small restaurants selling



Myaynigone is to plunge in and follow your senses wherever they lead. But for those who want a bit of guidance, here's a brief list of a few of the neighbourhood's more firmly established restaurants.

Seit Taing Kya No 44 Ma Po Street

This is one of the most well-known teashops in Yangon, and most taxi drivers can take you straight there, provided you pronounce the name correctly. It's particularly crowded in the morning (it's closed in the evening) – look for the traffic jam on the west end of narrow Ma Po Street, as hungry patrons from across Yangon converge and jockey for limited parking. The fame is justified: The mut-

Myanmar, Shan and Kachin food, as well as the usual smattering of places to drink tea or beer while sitting on low, plastic stools and enjoying a dog's-eye view of street life. At virtually every corner there are mobile barbecue and boiling-pig-gut carts, and there are also several outdoor markets in the area.

Perhaps the best approach to



Discover A Moment of Exquisite Dining Experience

Coffee. Fine Food. Wine. Dessert



Yangon International Hotel Compound Call 09 730 298 33 for reservations & private events

Food and Beverage Special Feature

Editors: Myo Lwin, Ben White

Writers: Myo Lwin, Ben White,

Douglas Long, Aye Sapay Phu,

Myat May Zin, Noe Noe Aung,

Shwe Yee Saw Myint, Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

Design and DTP: Ko Htay, Ko Pxyo, Khin Zaw, Zarni, Ye Htay, Tha Hlyan

Photographers: Kaung Htet, Boothee, Ko Taik

Contact:

myolwin@myanmartimes.com.mm



places around Yangon. Coming from the north, it's first in a row of small shops that cook up a decent range of regional fare: D'Country Food (Shan and Thai), Jingpaw (Kachin) and Shin Shin Lashio (Chinese Muslim).

Danuphyu Daw Saw Yee Myanmar Restaurant **No 15 Mahabawga Street**

Quite famous among Yangon residents, this big, clean, bright, often-crowded venue features Myanmar food for Myanmar people. It's the real deal: The cooks don't scrimp on the oil, and the tastes are not sissified to conform to the delicate requirements of Western palates. Beer, fruit juices and yogurt drinks are also on the menu.

Malkikhu Cuisine

No 68 Myaynigone Zay Street

This low-key place offers very good Kachin food, including curries and noodles, using fresh ingredients. Owned by a Christian family, it's closed on Sundays. There is also a branch in Kandawgyi Park.

Tin Aye Biryani

No 36 Yadana Street

Tin Aye offers the usual biryani-oriented fare, perhaps a bit less oily than some other

which an iron griddle is used for cooking) and hot pot (a type of Chinese food in which ingredients are added to a pot containing simmering stock). Big windows provide a fish-bowl effect for passers-by who want to watch diners watching chefs frying up their meat and vegetable on the huge griddle.

Zeal Coffee Lounge and Restaurant

No 99B Myae Nu Street (Ground Floor, Lamai Condominium)

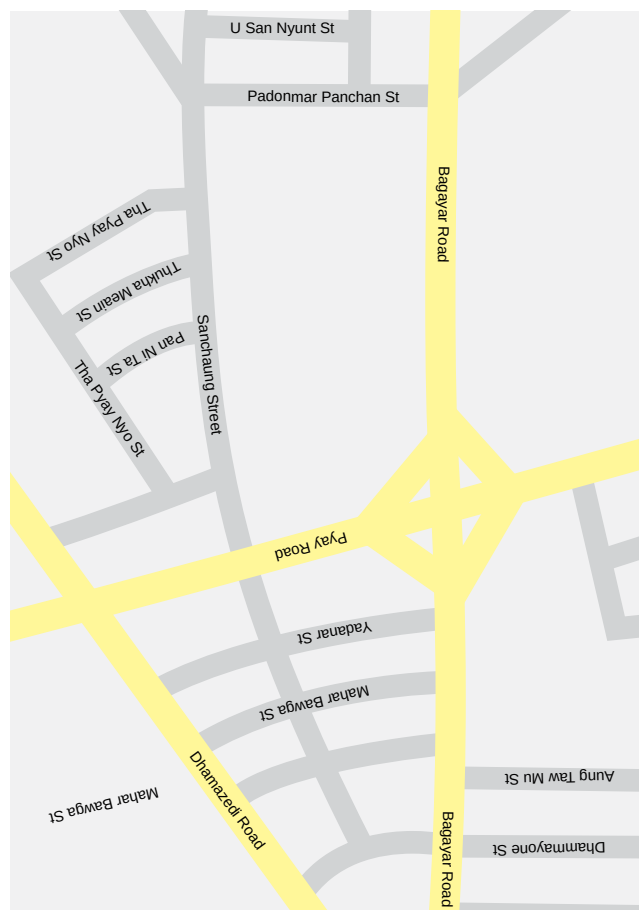
This street was once home to two popular, side-by-side

barbecue shops that were booted out a few years ago by landowners who wanted to cash in on the condominium boom. On nights of one-eighth-full sickle moon, the ghosts of people enjoying

their grilled fish, marlar hinn and Tiger draught can sometimes be heard. In the world of the living, meanwhile, there's now Zeal Coffee Lounge and Restaurant, with its comfy chairs, fully stocked bar and wall-mounted TVs. Virtually unknown in its first months of existence, it attained must-see status when a legendary local film director chose it as the location for a music video for hip-hop star and gangsta extraordinaire J-Me. Now people from all over the world flock here to see where the magic happened.



Pictures : Boothee






**Experience the excitement of our creative process;
from discovery through development,
to the emotional pleasure and celebration of the final product
join us and enjoy the journey.**

Sun Power Company Limited
No. 12B, Thalerwaddy Street,
7 Mile, Pyay Rd., Mayangone Township.
Tel : (95-1) 056728, 056729,
056745, 056746
Email : sunpowercompany.ygd@gmail.com
Website : givaudan.com



Sayasan R

By Myo Lwin with Thomas Kean and Ben White

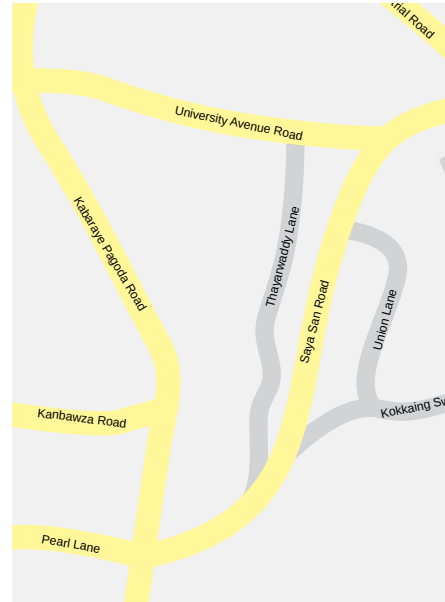
while Samurai Sushi offers a quirky, but nicely intimate experience in a bungalow just off Saya San, hidden away down a small alleyway.

Mr Guitar

No 22 Saya San Road

Mr Guitar opened 15 years ago, setting a standard for decent drinking holes. It's distinctive decent from the main road by stone stairwell through an overgrown garden adds to the feel of the place, before entering the dimly lit bar itself. Red brick walls covered in graffiti show the many years that customers have been frequenting the bar. The main pull of the place has been its commitment to showcasing live bands, as well as the decent selection of drinks and food on offer.

Dr Nay Myo Say, the bar's owner, got the idea to open the first Mr Guitar chain restaurant back in 1994 as an under ground place on Barr street in downtown Yangon, before opening a second at Bogyoke market. He opened



a third on Link street in Bahan township, before deciding in 1997 to open one single spacious venue, and moved to Saya San Street.

"To be cost effective, we tried to decorate the restaurant with whatever was available nearby and free. We kept the brick walls so it would have

SITUATED northeast of downtown, Saya San Road has for a long while balanced on the edge of decent places to dine out in Yangon, offering potential but without fully developing what could be.

Things are starting to look quite different now, with a number of new venues opening up giving the street a new lease of life.

Nestled a reasonable distance past Shwedagone in Dagon township, Saya San Street just off Kaba Aye road and heads down towards new university

avenue and Yankin centre.

The street in itself is nothing special, and without a pavement to stroll along it is more suited to clientele turning up in car or taxi.

Dimly lit at night, each brightly lit place draws in their respective customers, with a few places struggling to keep the parked cars from blocking the street off entirely.

And while it is still lined with fair number of karaoke joints and generic pan-Asian style restaurants that make it like most other parts of town, the streets early promise was forged by a

handful of places such as Mr Guitar, 7-Up and Sein Lyan, while its attraction has been raised by new places such as Acacia tea Salon.

The road also boasts a decent showing of east Asian cuisine, with the newly opened Shwe Be, one of the only places to get roast duck in Yangon, opposite the solitary North Korean restaurant in town, Pyongyang Koryo. The south Korean, Dae Won Gak, is further along Saya San street,



Tip Top
B A K E R Y

FAST & GOOD
Restaurant

United Living Mall
fashions • food • urban lifestyle

No. 48, Kyaikasan Road, Tamwe Tsp, Yangon.
Contact No: 01-551177

Hot Line:
392928
253642

မော်တော်ယာဉ်
လေက ဘတ်စ်
ဒရပ်ရပ်ကို သိရှိနိုင်ရန်
WHEELS ကိုပတ်ပါ

WHEELS
သက်ဝင်လှုပ်ရှားပါးများ

Sein Hlyan
Saya San Road

Dae Won Gak
No 17 Saya San Road

Pyongyang Koryo
A-5 Saya San Road

Acacia tea salon
No 52 Sava San Road



"I would say the food was only average so I kind of felt it wasn't particularly worth the price," said Ma Win Myat Myat. ■



Pictures : Ko taik



Fried ice-cream, strawberry smoothie and pie Café Bisou Insein Road

Aside from the culinary delicacies of Barbecue and grilled fish, Hledan offers plenty of places to sit back and relax over a cold drink and sweet desserts.

Café Bisou on the Yangon-Insein road, facing YKKO kyay-oh, Hledan branch is an excellent choice. Situated above a flower shop, it boasts colourful floral-inspired design, and gives you an unrivalled view of the bustling crowds below. Their menu has a selection of western foods such as pizza, burgers, pies, as well as cold drinks. Their strawberry smoothie – a mix of yogurt and strawberry juice – has a nice balance of sour and sweet. Fried vanilla ice-cream is also great, with the crispy outer layer giving a new texture to the classic ice-cream.

Hledan Junction

By Noe Noe Aung

WITH its proximity to Yangon University, filling the area with students, Hledan has become one of Yangon's liveliest areas to eat out.

Centred around Hledan junction, the area boasts a heady mix of trendsetting fashion outlets, all manner of street side delights, and Myanmar teashops made for a new generation.

Wandering Hledan offers a theoretical safari of veritable delights, with a myriad of side streets that demand to be explored.



Grilled Fish Hledan Road

One of the big attractions to Hledan is seeing the WHAT street taken over by a run of grilled fish stalls. From 6pm hoards of students gather in groups, sat on knee-high stools, and packed into the hotly fought over spaces designated to each stall. The sight of so many people thronged together in appreciation of grilled fish gives an immediate picture of the vibrancy of Hledan's micro-culture.

The stalls also offer sumptuous Shan-Chinese mala hin and Thai-style papaya salad.



Hot tea, black coffee and light food Shwe teashop U Tun Lin yard



Even when the crowds die down after feasting out on the stalls along the main streets, Hledan doesn't stop. Turning into side streets such as U Tun Lin yard street, kids head for more modern designed teashops than the classic street-corner haunts associated with Myanmar. Shwe certainly doesn't catch the eye as a Myanmar teashop. Once you pass through the entrance, you are confronted with a large open space with artificial waterfall, coconut tree, green grass and colourful tables and chairs. A favourite hangout, it one of the many places you can get tea, coffee, cold drinks and, of course, some food until 11 pm.

SUNDAY BRUNCH & DITCH



Ks. 18,000 PER PERSON
BUY 10 GET FREE 1
BRUNCH: 1130AM TO 230PM
DITCH: 630PM TO 1000PM

FREE FLOW OF SOFT DRINKS, BEER AND LOCAL ROSE WINE
ONE GLASS OF SPARKLING WINE

CALL 662866, 662867 TO MAKE RESERVATION, SALES@NYALAXHOTEL.COM



Yay-mont, Mont Thaing Chone and chicken-skin salad Insein Road

Hledan's food offerings don't seem to stop attracting people, no matter what time of night. For a good distance along Insein Road, there is hardly room to move for all the snack stalls, selling everything from trendy South Korean snacks or dimsum to more traditional Myanmar fare. Yay mont , a traditional snack made of rice powder and water, is a favourite for Myanmar. While Mont Thaing Chone –another traditional snack made of egg, rice powder and coconut – is equally as tasty.

Myanmar traditional snacks are not expensive, giving extra incentive to try everything on show. If you fancy testing yourself, and willing to wait in the long queue of eager customers, chicken-skin salad is a local delight. Its mix of spicy chili and sour lemon, with the chicken skin is a mouth-watering dish.



Pork and Barbecue The Prome Pyay Road

The Prome restaurant sits beside the Yangon-Insein Road, offering a menu of shell-less crab, eel with butter and pork-neck salad, frog, sparrow and pig-tail for those with a taste for the unordinary. If this is a step too far for many, they also have barbecued pork skewers. The meat is succulent, benefiting from being steamed first, and then coated in a moorish sweet sauce.





Internationally Acclaimed. Locally Read.

Translating editorial excellence into advertising logic is just plain common sense.
And it is at the heart of everything we do at The Myanmar Times.

We consistently break news of national and international
significance with our all-round focus on quality journalism.

Last week's excellence in opinion writing prize at the Society of Publishers in Asia
2012 Awards in Hong Kong against the likes of South China Morning Post and
Straits Times shows the esteem with which Asian publishers value the paper.

It also makes The Myanmar Times the first newspaper
to be recognised and rewarded by its peers internationally.

As an advertiser it makes perfect sense to use the publication
that is internationally acclaimed with a local focus;
a community newspaper that is there for you each and every day of the year.

The Only Award Winning Newspaper.

THE MYANMARTIMES **မြန်မာတိုင်း(မ်)**
HEARTBEAT OF THE MYANMAR NATION

Call us now on 392 928 to talk about your advertising needs, or phone:
Ross Dunkley – Managing Director & Editor in Chief 0950 47936
Khin Thandar Htay – National Sales Director 0950 26485
Min Min Tun – Mandalay Advertising Manager 0920 19712
Soe Than Lynn – Bureau Chief, Nay Pyi Taw 0973 115259

Adverts drive vitamin supplement popularity

By Aye Sapay Phyu

THE increasing use of vitamin supplements as a dietary supplement is often being driven by advertisements rather than direct recommendation from doctors, and can cause negative effects, say health experts.

A retired physician said that advertisements of some vitamin supplements by certain medical suppliers are very good at attracting consumers to buy their products, and people should be aware of that.

He said that vitamins and minerals are a fundamental need for a healthy life on a daily basis, but the main resources are vegetables, fruits, fishes and dairy products.

"If you eat enough vegetables, fish - which is cooked in a proper way - regularly, you don't need to take vitamin supplements. Instead, vitamin supplements are essential for people who are recovering from illness and for those who have no time to prepare decent



Pic: The Myanmar Times

tisement, thinking it would be beneficial for girls. I hoped my skin, hair and nails would become healthier and more beautiful," she said.

"I noticed that I am getting more quality sleep and eating well after taking the vitamins but I don't think my skin, hair and nails are any healthier than before," she said.

However, she admitted that

out without adequate health checks to find out if the customer has any history of allergies or negative reaction to certain prescriptions.

Ma Khine, 36, a housewife, said she was apprehensive to take vitamin pills that she had not consumed before, after suffering an allergy from a new brand of vitamins.

"I usually just take vitamin pills such as Cevit as I have used them since childhood.

"Unfortunately, I tried some new vitamin tablets after being recommended by my local pharmacy last year. I suffered a serious allergy. I had no idea at first that the cause of the allergy was due to that new vitamin product until I went to my doctor and she asked me if I was taking anything. Now I don't dare take any medicine that I haven't had before," she said.

While vitamins are important for a healthy diet, the important thing is to understand their correct dosage, said the retired physician.

He said that taking vitamin A in excess can cause convulsions while a surplus of vitamin D can lead to stones developing in the urine system and also stiff joints.

He said vitamin A however, which is present in red, yellow and green coloured vegetables and fruit and also eggs, can help eyesight, while a similar lack of vitamin A can lead to night blindness.

Vitamin D is essential for the strength of bones and teeth. Having a bath in the morn-

ing sun is the best way to get enough vitamin D, preventing soft bones in children and lower bone density in old people, he said.

The physician suggested eating sea fish, green vegetables and also nuts to enrich vitamin E, essential in reducing free radicals.

He added that a maximum need of vitamin C, which is present in fruits such as lemon, lime and tomatoes, is 200 mg a person a day.

"If you take more than the required amount, the excess is not stored in the body. Vitamin C acts as an antioxidant to prevent cancer and helps maintain healthy skin."

He said that the B group vitamins, B1, B6 and B12 are also important for the nervous system and eye sight.

If someone suffers from a particular vitamin deficiency, it is possible that the patient would need a boost from all the other kinds of vitamins, he said. ■

Concerns growing with MSG over-use

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

MONOSODIUM glutamate (MSG) has risen to become a household staple in Myanmar, but increasing awareness of the dangers of overuse is helping to reduce such over-reliance.

"I used to use traditional ingredients like dried prawn, fish sauce and fish paste before MSG appeared in Myanmar. Today I use a 50 gram pack of MSG every three days in my home," said housewife Daw Khin May.

A big reason for the conversion to MSG is price and the fact that it is available anywhere, despite being banned by the government since 2000.

"I spend K100 on a 50 gram packet of MSG. It is cheaper than dry prawn and fish sauce; I even heard that some people use MSG to make dried prawn and fish sauce now.

"I know using MSG is not healthy, so I now try to reduce the amount of MSG I use," she said.

Dr Sett Paing Lynn Khant, a health columnist, told *The Myanmar Times* that MSG can aid obesity, cardiac problems such as extreme drops in blood pressure, a rapid heartbeat and hypertension, as well as neurological problems, reproductive disorders, and can affect the brain system.

"Myanmar people eat a lot of very salty foods, such as fish paste and dried fish and now also use a lot of MSG. Mohinga shops in Yangon often compete with each other to see how many packets of MSG they can use," he said.

The main problem is the overuse of MSG in an already salty diet, due to a lack of public awareness of the possible health consequences, he said.

Some restaurants have begun to advertise themselves

as non-MSG, such as Shwe Yee snack shop and Shwe Zone fresh juice and salad shops owned by U Maung Mg Thein.

"The government doesn't prohibit us not to use MSG in shops, but in my opinion, we shouldn't use MSG for health reasons," he said.

His shops even have signs up saying they don't use MSG in the food.

"When I go to some restaurants, I don't know that a little amount of MSG has been added to the food but I can't stand it when a lot of MSG is used," he said.

U Maung Mg Thein said that as MSG enhances the flavour of dishes, the taste is very different. "People say that MSG improves the taste of food. Many of my customers don't like our mohinga because they say it isn't like other shops," he said.

But the miss-use of MSG is important as it reflects the broader issue of the use of chemicals in food production, he added.

"Every day we see many kinds of disease occur because of unnatural products. Today people find it more difficult to eat healthy foods such as fresh fish, meats and fruits. Most foods have been grown using chemicals to enhance their flavour and colour."

However, four months ago the trade department permitted the legal import of five new products, including MSG, according to Dr Zaw Win, director of Food and Drug Administration department.

The government move is intended to improve regulation and increase trade of products that comply to official health standards, he said, adding it came after continuous lobbying from companies, including from Thailand and China, seeking FDA approval. ■



Pic: The Myanmar Times

food," he said, adding that "In these instances, the important thing is not to consume more than is needed for your daily requirement."

In Myanmar, South Korean ginseng, Enervon C, Revicon, Vitiron are popular items, which is partly due to television commercials or print media advertisements.

Ma May Oo, 26, said that she is taking multi-vitamins everyday not on the instruction of her doctor, but on her own decision.

"I have been taking them for about three months. I became aware of them from an adver-

she had previously taken vitamin pills she had seen through adverts that had made her feel sick.

"When I took vitamins with ginseng, I got stomach pains so I stopped taking them. I also took medicine that contained iron supplements but I stopped after direction from my doctor. After viewing my results from a medical check up, he said it could harm my health.

"I plan to consult my doctor about the vitamin tablets I'm taking now," she added.

However, even under direction from pharmacies, recommendations can be given



Local knowledge a commodity for soft drinks market

By Myat May Zin

SOFT drinks companies are facing the challenge of improving their business models as the market develops and opens up, say industry experts.

"I can see the local soft drinks market growing and growing. There are many new brands coming in. And things are changing as the glass bottles market is on a downward trend while aluminium and plastic bottles market, such as Blue Mountain and Max Plus, is increasing," said U Win Myint, director of Loi Hein company.

To maintain market share in the face of increasing competition from foreign brands coming to Myanmar, mostly from China and Thailand, local soft

drink business need to improve technical capacity, he said.

But a key advantage for local companies is an understanding of the local market.

"The Myanmar consumer prefers a cheap product and they also like it sweet, especially in rural areas. Only a small number of people have brand loyalty, such as Coca Cola, Pokker, Sprite etc., most soft drink consumers in Myanmar only focus on price," said U Win Myint.

"You can see this with the large market share of Chinese products because of their cheap price. Most of the Chinese products are distributed under so many different brand names, coming in both legally and illegally," he said.

The carbonate soft drink market currently has three main local players, Max Plus

soft drinks produced by Pin Ya company, Blue Mountain soft drinks from Loi Hein company and Crusher, Orange, Star Cola drinks by MGS.

The other soft drinks market is cordials, represented by Thayaphu (Crown) brand and Happy brand.

"I see only two class of consumer in Myanmar: upper and lower class," said U Than Nang, owner of Happy Industry. "Upper class people are more brand loyal than lower class people, who only focus on price.

"There is a middle class but they buy expensive brands when they have the money or choose cheaper products when they don't," he added.

"Before the new government, the price was quite different between foreign soft drinks



Plastic bottles and aluminium cans are the market trend in the soft drink industry. Pic: The Myanmar Times

and local products because most of the foreign products entered Myanmar illegally over the border. But as they .. distribute in the Myanmar market legally the price is not so different. Queen brand (cordial) from Thailand is K1200 a bottle while Happy brand is K800

a bottle. The consumer who isn't concerned about K400 will choose Queen."

There is also a sizable home-made soft drink market that caters for lower income consumers, he said. Home-made soft drinks are used by street sellers for making cold drinks

and frozen ice sticks.

"They can get the soft drink chemical products to create home-made soft drinks easily from shops on 38th street and 40th streets. But they have no health guarantee and the companies also have no health insurance certificate," he said. ■

Instant gratification in a packet comes with hidden costs

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

WAKING up in the morning to the smell of a cup of coffee mix, or a choice of instant noodles for lunch, while grabbing a packet of crisps when returning home from work can all seem tempting due to lack of preparation needed

for instant gratification.

When the alternative of grabbing a bite or a drink from a street vendor can cause a moment's hesitation over hygiene, the rise in variety of instant foods can appear all the more appealing.

But attractive packaging

and advertising campaigns can be a distraction in themselves, minimizing important issues concerning health and food safety.

"Instant foods are a time-saver but ... there needs be strict laws for the production of instant foods," said doctor Linn Sat Paing Hmuu.

There have been cases of packs of instant foods made using lead paint which can rub from the pack to the food. It needs to have tin and nickel underneath otherwise customers can be at risk from the lead, he said.

"And also for cans, there are procedures in packaging

that if it is not followed then bacteria can spread, causing stomach problems," the doctor said.

Another chemical used with instant foods, Nitrite, can trigger asthma, cause headaches while other long term risks can come from the use of formalin in meat, Linn Sat Paing Hmuu added

"If we eat those chemicals daily, it can lead to cancer and other diseases, but we can drink fresh fruit juice after eating, because it can reduce the level of toxins we ingest," he said.

"The Biological Value Unit, which is the guide on the outside of a packet should contain the Vitamin C groups, Vitamin B groups, some Amino Acids in ratio."

For Ko Kyaw Kyaw Han, 27, who works as a seaman, he said that instant foods were a necessity for him as there was little alternative.

"It is not easy to eat instant noodles all the time. Although our chef cooked fish for lunch and dinner, some of us can't eat fish since childhood, so it was always noodles."

Ko Kyaw Kyaw Han said they would buy a lot of instant products when they arrived at harbour and survived off them until the next time they docked.

"After eating those instant noodles for nearly one year on a daily basis, I felt pains in my stomach and my hair fell out more than ever. I started to doubt the health value of noodles and am now trying to eat fish," Ko Kyaw Kyaw Han said.

Ma Wai Wai Hlaing used to eat a lot of instant noodles, but stopped after developing backache and regular headaches, which she felt came from her diet.

"I used to eat two packs of noodles everyday, for breakfast and lunch, and then maybe for dinner, but after reading carefully the ingredients list on the pack, I made sure to only eat them occasionally," she said.

"Also, we can't see how the factories make instant foods last for such a long time and to be tasty. I don't mean it is necessarily dangerous to eat, but we need to take care not to over eat," she said. ■



Different instant foods in colourful packagings attract customers. Pic: The Myanmar Times