

# Boba lovers take note — healthier low sugar bubble tea coming early next year

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The healthier bubble tea will include low-GI pearls, sugar syrup and sugar caramel. — Picture by Mohd Yusof Mat Isa

KUALA LUMPUR, October 16 — Fancy having a tasty and thirst quenching bubble tea without the risk of diabetes? Here’s some good news for you.

Food ingredient specialist Holista CollTech Ltd (Holista) together with home-grown fruit juice manufacturer SunFresh Fruit Hub Sdn Bhd (Fruit Hub) announced today a joint collaboration to produce three key healthier ingredients for the global bubble tea industry.

Deemed suitable for the health-conscious and those at risk of diabetes, Holista and Fruit Hub will co-develop healthy versions of three bubble tea ingredients — the pearl, sugar syrup and sugar caramel — without altering the taste and texture.

All three ingredients will have low-glycemic index, which measures a food’s impact on blood sugar levels.



Some of the natural ingredients used by Holista CollTech Ltd to produce the healthy bubble tea. — Picture by Mohd Yusof Mat Isa

To reduce the sugar content of the popular drink, Holista will produce low-GI pearls by combining its patented GI-Lite, an all-natural formula, with tapioca starch to lower the GI without compromising the taste and texture.

Fruit Hub announced that they are currently processing the pearls at their facility in Lanchang, Pahang using a formula of their Taiwanese partner, YongDa Food Technology Co Ltd, with an aim to lower the GI from 70-75 (currently) to below 55.

Apart for the pearls, Holista will also introduce a sugar syrup using its proprietary low-GI and low-calorie sugar called 80Less, which has 80 per cent lesser calories and yet delivers the same taste sensation.

According to Dr Rajen, the healthier sugar syrup not only reduces unhealthy effects but also lowers the cost for manufacturers and vendors.

The third ingredient will be Holista's proprietary low-GI sugar caramel (brown sugar) which retains sweetness with lower calories.

Made from molasses, it is used as a pre-pour to sweeten the pearl or as a medium to cook them.

Research and product trials will begin this month by Sydney University Glycemic Index Research Service (SUGiRS), where testing will be done as per international standards for GI before the products hit the local and international market by the first quarter of 2020.



Holista CEO Datuk Dr Rajen Manicka and Fruit Hub chairman Mohamed Zainurin Mohamed Zain exchanging joint collaboration documents. Looking on is SunFresh managing director Foong Wai Fong. — Picture by Mohd Yusof Mat Isa

Holista, which is listed in Australia and has extensive operations in Malaysia, has gained global market acceptance for its low-GI noodles (sold to China and Korea) as well as roti canai and chapati flatbreads (sold in Malaysia and overseas).

SUGiRS has already validated the low-GI versions of flour-based noodles and flatbreads co-produced by Holista with scores that are significantly lower than products currently available.

Despite alarming reports of high sugar and carbohydrate content in bubble tea, Dr Rajen said they found that enthusiasts appear quite unfazed.

“The challenge is to offer a healthier version which can significantly reduce the potential of higher incidence of diabetes and obesity.

“We are combining science with the market reach and understanding of the needs of bubble tea manufacturers and vendors to offer a healthier alternative that is affordable,” he added.

According to Dr Rajen, a typical 500ml bubble tea drink contains at least 8.5 teaspoons of sugar, while each cup can contain anywhere between 281 to 640 calories.

SunFresh Fruit Hub managing director Foong Wai Fong said the partnership was “a Malaysian collaboration which can transform the global bubble tea industry for the better.”

“Fruit Hub has a strong network among the major bubble tea chains and we are confident that these three ingredients will make a real difference and can take the creative beverage industry to a whole new level – a tastier and healthier version in which consumers can enjoy the drink without health concerns,” she added.

Foong also hinted that they are currently in talks with one of the major bubble tea chains who showed strong interest to offer the healthy version of the drink alongside their offerings.