

Kebabs

It's the notorious meal at the end of a night out. It is also a favourite for many children at lunchtime – the Doner Kebab. Doner Kebabs are one of the most popular fast foods in the UK and in Germany.

What is a Kebab?

Traditionally, these are moulded into long meatballs (about 3 - 4 inches long and 1 1/2 inches in diameter) and put on skewers to grill. 'Kebab' literally means grilled or broiled meat. Kebabs usually consist of lamb and beef. Some styles of kebab have chicken or fish.

The word kebab comes from two Persian words – "Kam" – meaning less, and "Aab" – meaning water. The name describes the true meaning of kebabs – they are cooked with less or no water.

There are many different varieties of kebab. In Europe they are known as Doner kebab, and in the United States as Shish kebab. The kebab is slowly roasted on a vertical rotating spit, slices are cut off and served with a variety of foods such as chips, salad, pita bread and either a garlicky salad cream or sauce.

It sounds good – made from good meat and prepared using a dry cooking method (no fat is added), so how does a kebab contain about 500 calories and 30g fat? The reality is that nowadays it's hardly ever pure meat used for the kebab.

Like many other foods, the doner kebab has been Anglicized. In this country, doner kebabs are now made with minced meat, the yoghurt is substituted with a fatty chilly sauce and the salad is represented by a limp piece of ice-berg lettuce. Doner kebab manufacturers in the UK use lamb breasts and off cuts, these are processed to form a meat emulsion, which is then rolled into smaller balls, binding them together with "lamb skin" in the form of a cone.

Although food labeling legislation is tightened by the day, the take away industry is not governed by food labeling legislation. A recent survey done on 60 take away foods revealed the ugly and unhealthy truth about the British version of the kebab. Salt and fat levels were shockingly high. One doner kebab contained 22% fat and another contained 12 g of salt, which is the equivalent of 2 heaped teaspoons, that's twice the daily recommendation in just one meal. Salt is linked to high blood pressure and the food industry has been making huge strides in recent years to reduce the amount of salt added to processed foods.

Unfortunately the once very tasty and healthy dish has been turned into a very unhealthy take away food.