

Wayside eateries still popular among the poor

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The brisk business at the wayside eateries in the city makes a mockery of the ongoing mobile court drive against selling of unhygienic and adulterated foods.

The low-income people, mostly day labourers and rickshawpullers, resort to eating regularly at the shabby-looking eateries, ignoring the risk of health hazards.

"I have to pay at least Tk 25 for a lunch at a cheap restaurant in the city, but here it costs only Tk 10 to 12," said Ibrahim, 24, a day labourer.

Foods are kept uncovered in these eateries on footpath, allowing dust and flies to make them unhygienic but the customers do not care about it.

Most of these restaurants start the day's business at noon and keep on selling the cheap food items until 10:00 or 11:00pm. The foods go rotten by the evening.

The customers are not offered the facility to wash their hands before eating at this wayside eateries. They take food sitting on sacks or wooden tools in a dirty atmosphere.

Abu, a rickshawpuller, said: "I know these foods are not hygienic but it is cheap for me."

Sufia, 40, offers rice, two types of fish curry, vegetables and pulse in her wayside eatery. She herself cooks the foods and sells at a very cheap rate.

Sufia knows these are hygienic but when asked about the dirty environment of her footpath

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restaurant, she remained silent.

Abdul Malek, owner of another wayside eatery, sells rice, pilau, beef and chicken. He usually brings these leftover foods from renowned hotels and community centres.

Aktar Hossain, a rickshawpuller, said a lunch with bread and banana costs only Tk 4 at a footpath restaurant. "This saves money," he said.

Not only the low-income people eat at these restaurants, some students and lower class office staff also visit them for taking tea and snacks.

A number of such wayside tea stalls on the Dhaka University campus are very popular among the students and university employees.

"Cleanliness of these eateries is not an important matter to me as you know

most of the expensive restaurants are not maintaining it," said Tushar, a DU student.

Barek, 45, owner of a tea stall on the DU campus, has a variety of customers -- from students to rickshawpullers, from university employees to day labourers.

Karim, a rickshawpuller, said, "I do not bother about cleanliness. When I feel hungry I stop there and eat as these stalls are cheap."

Anwar, a DU official, said: "It has become a habit of us to come here to take tea and snacks. It is true that the foods served here are not hygienic."

"I try my level best to serve foods in hygienic atmosphere. I keep biscuits and other dried foods in airtight jars," Rahman, owner of a tea stall, said.



Rickshaw-pullers take their fill from a wayside eatery.

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10x4

10x1

10x3