

Peking duck a lifesaver

THE ingredient used to colour Peking duck can cut the risk of dying from heart disease by a third and cancer by two-thirds, scientists say.

Researchers looking at red yeast rice said the benefits of the Chinese food colouring even seemed to outstrip those of statins — the much vaunted cholesterol-lowering drugs.

Describing the effects as “profound”, they said extract of the fermented rice could play an important part in improving heart health.

Taking the supplements also nearly halves the risk of a second heart attack and reduces the odds of cardiac surgery, they found.

The rice is fermented with the red yeast *Monascus purpureus*. It has been used in China for thousands of years as a food preservative, colourant and seasoning, and herbal medicine.

Researcher Dr David Capuzzi, of Thomas Jefferson University in Pennsylvania, said the effects could not be explained by the “statin” content of the extract alone, and he cautioned against self-medication.