



≡ MENU

Kausmo (Singapore)

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Interior of Kausmo at Shaw Centre

When Ken Loon started Magic Square last May, he had unknowingly kickstarted a trend of grooming young local cooking talents in Singapore. Whilst his one-year incubator project has ground to a halt recently, the torch has now been passed to other new restaurants helmed by young chefs, most recently Kausmo.



Some of the not-so-ugly vegetables that Kausmo works with

Opened in Shaw Centre since mid June, Kausmo looks no different from other restaurants but dig deeper and you'll discover that it has a unique focus on “aesthetically filtered foods”, defined as ingredients that are oddly shaped and oddly sized, over-ripened or over-stocked. Whilst certainly not the city's first sustainable-minded eatery (the now-defunct Bistro November was there first), Kausmo is a laudable initiative taking baby steps – rather than pushing boundary – in reducing food wastes. Importantly, it also makes an effort to source sustainable seafood, utilizes all parts of a produce and explores the use of native flora, some rarely seen, on the plate, things that a clutch of restaurants is also exploring of late. It's worth noting that they don't just stop at reducing food wastes as the restaurant also uses upcycled porcelain tableware from Legle Gaia that would otherwise have been discarded (look out for the decal prints used creatively to cover spots and dimples on the plates).



Kuah (left) and Tang (right)

Run by two under-30 young female co-founders – 24-year-old Culinary Institute of America graduate Lisa Tang, formerly of Jaan, Pollen and Les Amis, who helms the open kitchen studio; and 26-year-old Kuah Chew Shian, who runs the floor over two sittings in the 16-seat long table dining room, Kausmo serves a weekly changing carte blanche menu offering six courses (\$75++) of largely modern European with Asian – and at times local – touches.



Snacks (mushroom pate on the right)

It's key to know that Tang is not cooking with food wastes, so the produce she uses are never ugly, just sometimes mildly blemished. Open-capped Swiss brown mushrooms that fail to make

the cut for display at retail stores, therefore make it to Tang's opening snack of mushroom pate with burnt butter on almond crisp, a savoury one-bite delight. And overstocked tomatoes are roasted and stuffed into handmade tortellini with kampong chicken meat, the tomato so miniscule in quantity that we could barely discern its presence, and served in an intensely savoury chicken broth topped with leaves of local ulam raja plant. Again, its worth noting that the kampong chicken used, at merely 700g, is off-spec and way-too-small to be sold to supermarkets and restaurants.



Beef fat-roasted brussel sprout and radish

Oversized brussel sprouts and sprouted red radishes are also appreciated in their entirety. Roasted with beef fat and served on a puddle of yellow bean puree with cactus petals and not-so-pretty micro celery, these vegetables stand out for the robustness of flavours and are perfectly paired with the mildly savoury bean puree.

At Kausmo, the duo also promotes off cuts and seafood that's not been overfished.



Wagyu beef d-rump

So instead of serving ribeye or tenderloin, you get a thick slice of slow-cooked wagyu beef d-rump (or sirloin cap) glazed with a chipotle-laced black berry jam crafted inhouse from overstocked blackberries that would otherwise have been discarded. It's a decent piece of meat, if a little gamey and a tad bland (yes, even with the jam). We would happily prescribe char-grilling the meat to give it a kiss of char and for the fun of it, why not serve it with a side of braised ugly vegetables (we suggest near-expiry ones)? But this one comes with a puddle of heavenly smoked cauliflower puree, a crowning glory of succulent elephant bush (can't say I've seen or tasted this one!) and a drizzle of vegetable jus to make-up for the overall shortfall in flavour. On the whole, it more than passes muster.



Teochew fish porridge

For carbs, Tang falls back on her Teochew heritage, fielding a bowl of heart-warming Teochew fish porridge with preserved plum. By no means an ordinary fish porridge, Tang makes a stock with trimmings and bones of the golden trevally before she cooks the Myanmar brown rice in it for one and a half hours. With every spoonful, you taste the richness of the fish while biting into slices of the succulent fish. A Kausmo icon-in-the-making.



For those who wish to imbibe, three reds and a white are available by the glass but, more interestingly, an array of slightly alcoholic housemade kombucha is also available either by the glass (\$9 each) or as a flight of three or \$20 for three glasses), a personal favourite being the red hibiscus kombucha.



Homemade sauces and jams for sale

If you want to support the girls, show them some love by buying their home-bottled sauces and jams, made with love from ingredients like overstocked blackberries and overripened persimmon. Better still, pay them a visit!

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