

# Food For Thought: How Kausmo Redefines The Dining Experience

HOME » FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HOW KAUSMO REDEFINES THE DINING EXPERIENCE

*Ever wondered what goes on your plate? Kausmo (derived from the word “Cosmos”, referring to a system of thought), a dining concept launched in 2019, takes food for thought to the next level, with aims to spark conversations about practicing thoughtfulness and conscientiousness in the way we dine and live. We speak to young founders Lisa Tang and Kuah Chew Shian on how they’re redefining the dining experience.*

**4 JANUARY 2021 / BY SGN**

---

When you pop by the supermarket for your weekly grocery run, the first thing you’ll be greeted by are rows of cherry-picked fruits in perfect shapes, sizes and ripeness. This is because behind the scenes, importers and wholesalers have already filtered out produce that are overstocked, over-ripened and/or oddly shaped and sized. What happens to the produce that does not make the cut to the grocery aisle?

Kausmo co-founders Chef Lisa Tang and Kuah Chew Shian are determined to challenge food norms that cause unnecessary food wastage with Kausmo, their novel dining concept that offers patrons a dining experience that sparks conversations about a thoughtful and conscientious way of living.

## Celebrating Imperfections One Plate at A Time

In the food industry, retailers prize produce that are uniform in shape and size as they appeal to consumers; however, Chew Shian believes that nature simply does not work that way. “We want to show that ingredients not ideal for retail can be perfect on our plates. At Kausmo, we celebrate imperfections,” she explains. The produce they work with are procured directly from importers and wholesalers, and at times, are in fact fresher than what is found in the supermarkets and wet markets.

Chef Lisa, who was runner-up for the 2014 Les Amis Awards Culinary Competition, creatively repurposes these aesthetically filtered out ingredients into dishes on their Carte Blanche menu, which changes based on the availability of produce. Kausmo’s signature dishes are created with European technique with Asian influences, often incorporating little tidbits of surprise from Lisa’s Teochew roots – for example, the homely bowl of congee is [a staple post-main course](#) at Kausmo.



*True to Chef Lisa's Teochew roots, finishing the main course with congee is staple to Kausmo's Carte Blanche menu.*

To encourage more thoughtful conversations, the space at Kausmo is also uniquely designed to create an environment that simulates the warm experience of dining at a friend's place. The space features an open kitchen with a single-table setup that seats a maximum of 16 diners per service, emulating an intimate and cosy setting.

As dishes are served to the guests, Chef Lisa and Chew Shian personally introduce what's on their plates, why the ingredients were filtered out by the suppliers, and what they did with the produce. If the guests expressed interest, the duo would also share ideas on wholesome produce utilisation. This includes interesting tips such as how one may use strawberry tops to infuse flavour into housemade vinegar that is made with basic ingredients like sugar,

water and organic vinegar!

“We always welcome our guests to ask us questions, and we engage in their conversations and discussions,” Lisa and Chew Shian tells us.

## Culinary Trailblazers

Opening a restaurant was not what the two had planned on pursuing. After meeting at Temasek Polytechnic as fellow students in Diploma in Culinary & Catering Management, Lisa and Chew Shian went on to pursue different career paths, with the former furthering her studies in culinary arts at Culinary Institute of America and the latter pursuing business management at Singapore Management University.

After graduating from the Culinary Institute of America, Lisa worked at Primo, a restaurant based at a farm in Maine, the northeasternmost U.S. state, which promotes zero-waste practices. “Primo prides itself on using ingredients grown locally, an idea which left a deep impression on me. This philosophy of sourcing drives us to explore using less conventional ingredients such as edible weeds and flowers that thrive in our climate, as well as develop a deeper understanding of food supply chains in Singapore,” Lisa says.





*Kausmo co-founders Chew Shian (left) and Chef Lisa (right) share that they were inclined to share the message and do something about the industry's fixation on aesthetically filtered fruits and vegetables.*

Chew Shian's overseas exposure during her business study mission at Singapore Management University expanded her worldview of Singapore's food supply chains. The programme was structured to allow students to explore business culture and practices in another country - for Chew Shian, she had visited Denmark, Norway and Sweden. "My trip to Scandinavia gave me more perspectives and food for thought, and similar to Lisa, it got me interested in understanding our food supply chain in Singapore," she says.

Soon after returning from Scandinavia, Chew Shian met up with Lisa, and were inspired to share thoughtfulness in the way we eat and live. Pursuing higher education in different fields eventually turned out to be the secret ingredient to their success - equipping

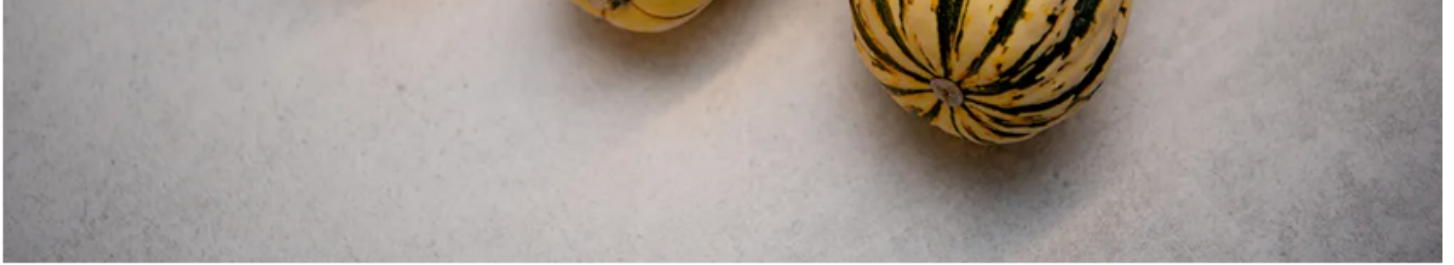
them with diverse skill sets in culinary arts and business.

## Taking Tiny Steps for Thoughtful Living

Disruption in global supply chains triggered by the pandemic has forced more local restaurants to reconsider sourcing ingredients locally from Singapore, a change Lisa and Chew Shian are heartened by. Sourcing locally not only helps the environment by eliminating fuel emissions from transporting the goods across borders, it also supports the local economy while ensuring that your produce is farm-fresh.

While this is a good start on the part of restaurants, Lisa and Chew Sian hopes that consumers will also begin to appreciate living consciously to a greater degree. With Kausmo sparking conversations on how one may be more thoughtful in their consumption habits, the duo hopes that guests will leave with knowledge on how they may take little steps towards living more consciously.





*Pictured here are Delicata Squash, which is also known as ‘Sweet Potato Squash’ as it has a deep brown sugar-like sweetness.*

“We hope to introduce small changes that anyone can make to be a little more conscientious in consumption. One way is to make the most out of the produce they buy,” they say. This includes simple tips on turning potato skins into tasty crisps and educating followers on lesser-known ingredients commonly found in Singapore.

Finally, bringing reusable containers is a great way to practice mindful living. If you don’t have them on you, you can still lessen the impact of using disposables by washing and reusing plastic containers.

“Being able to reuse containers reduces more footprint than single-use compostable packaging as composting is not a big practice in a land-scarce country like Singapore,” they share.



## About Lisa and Chew Shian

Lisa Tang and Kuah Chew Shian are co-founders of [Kausmo](#), a dining concept built on creating conversations about thoughtful and conscientious ways of living.

Chef Lisa is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and has represented Singapore in various international culinary competitions over the years. Prior to starting Kausmo and heading as chef, she has worked in a number of reputable restaurants in the US and Singapore.



Chew Shian is a graduate of the Singapore Management University's Business Management programme where she honed her skills for business management and her passion towards the issue of foodwaste in Singapore. Today, she is applying her knack for business management as front-of-house manager at Kausmo.

SHARE THIS:



---

 POSTED IN:

Culture

Lifestyle

People