

Food review: Kausmo is "a heroic attempt at elevating aesthetically filtered food"



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Chef hard at work. (PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

SINGAPORE — I was once told by my best friend that he only buys and eats tomatoes that were bright red in colour. A bourgeoisie preference further encouraged by his [Amazon Prime](#) delivery that seems to only send the most gorgeous and reddest of tomatoes to customers. This was in response to the joy I shared at having to pay only a dollar for three slightly less red tomatoes at the convenience store that opened at my void deck a few weeks back.

I knew this preference for aesthetically pleasing looking food was an issue when I spoke to [Food Bank's](#) founder, Nichol Ng,

who shared that now, suppliers are more discerning with the quality of produce they send to supermarkets. Slight blemishes, signs of over-ripening, and minor deformities are deemed unsuitable for display and are usually discarded. But can you blame them? One only need to look at Singaporean aunties who rummage, poke, and prod produce to sift out the best in terms of looks and feel.



The interior of Kausmo. (PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

Enter [Kausmo](#), a conscientious dining concept brought to life by duo Lisa Tang, and Kuah Chew Shian—both in their early 20s and unjaded by the culinary problems of the 21st century. They are problem solvers and are here to introduce Singapore to a new gastronomic indulgence that doesn't produce unnecessary food wastage. Every dish created here is carefully considered, and thoroughly thought through with ingredients that are ethically sourced—seafood comes from

small farming communities in the nearby waters, meats are utilised for their secondary, less popular cuts, and native greens and florals are used where possible. Kausmo primary focus is on using ingredients that are oddly-shaped, oddly-sized, overripen, and overstocked. Very first world problems indeed.

The space where all this thoughtfulness happens is not so much a restaurant than it is a cosy, dining salon that sits 16. There's an open kitchen where you can watch Chef Lisa meticulously plating her creations on plates from [Legle Gaia](#) that creates sustainable dinnerware—"A Kausmo-esque kiln of sorts," Chew Shian explains with a laugh. Walls, floor, and carpentry are in varying shades of slate, complemented by wood chairs and soft, warm lights that are as inviting as it sounds. I sit bathed in a swathe of sunlight that floods every nook and cranny of Kausmo, and wonder when all the flurry of cooking will commence.



Sourdough bread. (PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

And not a moment too soon. Glasses of Hojicha Kombucha tea—a fermented, slightly alcoholic and effervescent sweetened black or green tea drink packed chockfull of probiotics and lots of gut-friendly bacteria—is deftly set on the table as a palate cleanser for the courses to follow. To start, **Sourdough bread** served with a pale yellow quenelle of whipped butter and a small cut of Batoko plum—a native red fruit that is commonly found by the roadsides of Singapore.



(PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

Our first lesson in food conservation starts with a rectangle of brown butter wrapped in **mushroom pate** sitting on an almond crisp. The pate is, of course, made with 'ugly'

mushrooms. It's beautifully umami and pairs perfectly with the morsel of crunchy and lightly fried **sea bass belly** served with a dollop of bright calamansi aioli and a nutty wild pepper leaf.



(PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

A plate of roasted Brussels sprouts with a handsome char where fire meets produce is served alongside radishes and sits on a shallow sauce of rosemary and almond. This truly made my heart sing. The flavour is intense and full-bodied—a mild nuttiness layered with a pleasant tinge of bitterness to balance the pervading earthy flavours.





(PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

One dish, while exquisite in execution, is a tad challenging. **Roasted tomato tortellini** stuffed with shredded kampong chicken is a unique homage to Chef Lisa's Teochew heritage. It sits in a cloudy chicken broth that I feel was slightly too herbal for my taste and could use a pinch more salt to temper the brininess of chicken fat.



(PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

My interest is renewed with the timely appearance of the less popular **Wagyu Beef D-rump**—marinated in *Taucu* (bean paste) over 2 days, cooked rare, sliced, and stacked. This seems to be the week of having all types of beef parts, and here, I am not the least bit disappointed. On its own, the tender beef is tasty—juicy and beautifully seasoned. But mixing it with the vegetable jus (the colour of diluted coffee) and the aromatic smoked pumpkin puree (yellow, like the sun on a bright afternoon) instantly propels this dish from ten to a thousand.



(PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

The **Wild Fish Congee** is Chef Lisa's interpretation of the humble congee. The 'wild' in the name refers to the catch of the day that changes on the daily, depending on what was caught. The fish is bought whole and is distributed evenly throughout every dish of this dinner. I overhear Lisa

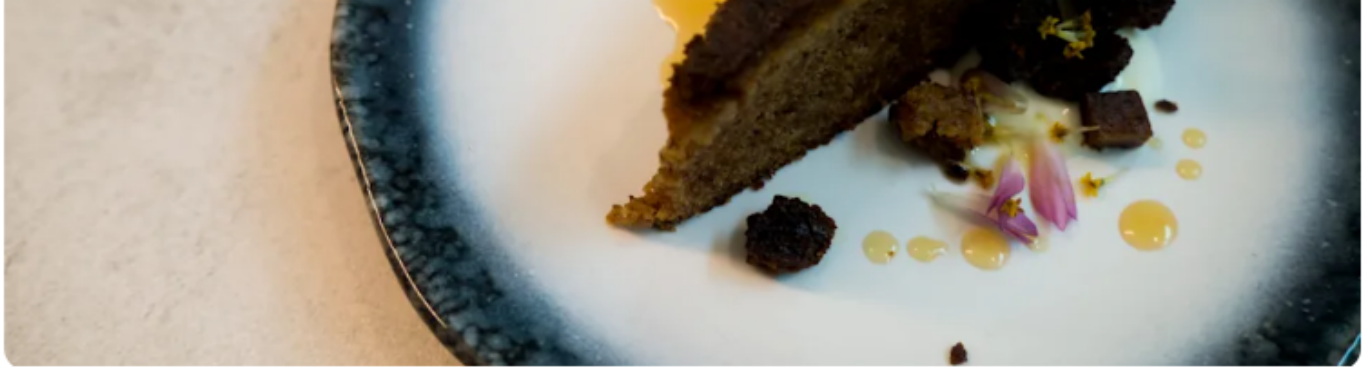
explaining to a diner how she manages to get the fishy smell out of the broth—the secret is to pan-fry the fish before letting it simmer in water. With that, you get a hearty and comforting congee filled with fish chunks that is fresh with a satisfying bite. I finish it to the very last drop.



(PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

Dessert is a two-parter affair. The first is a clear prelude—a rectangular opaque **jelly** is infused with fragrant lemongrass and sparsely filled with bits of winter melon. Lemon balm and Mexican tarragon suspend effortlessly to the top and lends a mild herbal twist to this crisp and refreshing dessert.





(PHOTO: Zat Astha/Yahoo Lifestyle Singapore)

The second is an obvious winner: a wedge of dense banana cake is infused with rum and baked till the crust breaks in your mouth with a satisfying crunch. It is sweet and feels like I'm eating hundreds of over-ripened bananas at one go. I'm not complaining. Banana cake 'croutons' come from the previous cake iterations that did not pass the taste test. Again, I'm not complaining. A quenelle of tart Greek yoghurt sits on the cake, artfully cascading down the side. I'm guessing it's there to counterbalance the pervading sweetness but it doesn't need it because this cake on its own is the epitome of perfection.

Technically, to achieve what Kausmo is aiming for is not difficult. You simply have to sit down and consider very carefully and thoughtfully the choices you make. But, that said, the finesse injected by Lisa and Chiew Shian into this menu and their attempts at elevating aesthetically filtered food are truly commendable. Where else in Singapore can you get to enjoy a 7-course menu in a beautiful and calming space that feels like a dining room of a home, and be hosted and educated by two ladies who are obviously passionate

about food and sustainability? If there's a place like that where I can eat well and feel good about myself while having dinner, I say, why the hell not.

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6-course Carte Blanche menu at S\$75++, with Kombucha tasting at an additional S\$20.

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Dinner only | 6.30pm and 8.30pm

Closed on Mondays and alternate Sundays