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## At Kausmo, Chef Lisa whips up a thoughtful and holistic dining experience

BY NAJIHAH RASHID | 08 SEP 2022



At Kausmo, co-founders Lisa Tang and Kuah Chew Shian collaborate with Les Amis Group to create a dining concept that inspires conversation revolving around thoughtful and conscientious ways of living.

Derived from the word “cosmos”, the restaurant is the brainchild of these two young and talented chefs. For Chef Lisa (who is a nominee for the Rising Female Chef award at the World Gourmet Summit 2019 and the runner-up for the 2014 Les Amis Awards Culinary Competition), the idea for Kausmo dawned on her after spending her time at a farm restaurant that practices zero-waste methods in America.

Bringing this thoughtful business model back home in Singapore, Kausmo integrates the use of aesthetically filtered foods. This means that the restaurant takes in fruits and vegetables that are overstocked, over-ripened, and oddly shaped and sized — which, for the most part, are thrown away for their visual quality.



Treasures at Kausmo, Singapore

Besides taking in this “unwanted” produce, the eatery takes ethical sourcing seriously. Back in Singapore, they order seafood from local or regional small farming communities that reflect this value. When it comes to meat, Kausmo considers fresh secondary cuts of meat that fall by the wayside in favour of prime cuts.

Similarly, the folks over at the restaurant explore forgotten native greens and florals to incorporate into the dishes.

While this sounds restrictive, this concept has the opposite effect. Because the chef has to get creative with the menu, it allows her to explore many different avenues that would have otherwise been overlooked.

In a special tasting through Singapore’s Passport to Feast: The SG Takeover, Kausmo took a day residence at Cuiscene, and *PrestigeOnline Malaysia* got a first-hand taste of the culinary magic straight from across the bridge.

### Highlights at Kausmo at Cuiscene:

At this one-day showcase, we got a sneak peek (and taste) of what Kausmo has to offer back on their island nation.





We started with a gorgeous *Wild Bayam Focaccia*, served with roasted portobello and trigona-preserved garlic. The focaccia was made to perfection — audibly crisp on the outside and super soft on the inside.



Delicious veloute to delight the senses.

Following that delicacy was the *Cucumber Veloute*, which is paired with bergamot and maple cashew and black bean chilli. The sauce is smooth, and the combination of the flavours sure did make our tastebuds sing in pleasure.





After that, we were delighted with the flavourful *Summer-end 'Minestrone'*, topped with juicy clams and decadent gnocchi. The clashing rich textures were magnificent, and we were left wanting more.



We were further tantalised by the next dish: the *Char-grilled Flat Iron*, served with zingy honeyed Thai chilli and (for a touch of whimsy) fiddleheads. Cooked to perfection, the combination of the fish and chilli was much welcomed after an indulgent plate.





Before we moved on to desserts, Chef Lisa soothed us with a hearty bowl of **Wild Fish Congee**, topped with fried mei chai and Kausmo's local Malaysian find, *ulam raja*.



For the penultimate dish, we were served with *Barley Tea Jelly* which was drizzled with lemon salt and calamansi glaze. The simple dessert was elevated with the beautiful taste profile, and we were left wanting more.





Last, but not least, Kausmo sealed the deal with a *Cherry Plum Nonnette* with mascarpone and curry leaf. The fusion of the flavour was delightful and made for the perfect end to the thoughtfully-planned meal.

While the duo was only cooking up a storm in Kuala Lumpur for one evening, you can experience this concept down in Singapore at 1 Scotts Road, Shaw Centre. Head over to [Kausmo's site](#) to make your reservation.

For now, read on to get insights from Chef Lisa of Kausmo.

### *PrestigeOnline Malaysia speaks to Chef Lisa on Kausmo's bold culinary crusade to vanquish food wastage*

#### **Why do you focus on reducing food wastage at Kausmo? What brought on this intention?**

The idea to look deeper into the food systems and types of food waste in Singapore only came about after we returned from our respective overseas school trips.

Chew Shian had just returned from Scandinavia where she went on a business study mission with Singapore Management University and I had returned from working at Primo – a restaurant on a farm in Maine, USA. We were both very inspired by how these countries have taken large steps in sustainability, caring for the environment, and taking pride in locally-sourced produce.

Insights from our respective trips got us both thinking about the food systems here in Singapore, prompting us to do more research and reach out to our importers. After understanding the food waste problem that comes from cosmetic filtering, we decided that this is a category of food waste that we wish to focus on, and we hope to do more to raise awareness and start conversations that would challenge our industry's norms.

Kausmo was then established as a concept centred around the idea of thoughtfulness, and this could be applied to every decision we make, even beyond the food that we eat and cook.

### How does this goal change the way you work in the kitchen as a chef? Does it limit your creativity or productivity? How sustainable is this way of working?

Kausmo serves a Carte Blanche (blank) menu, which meant that guests coming to dine at our restaurant are not shown the menu ahead of time. There might be some component changes based on the filtered produce available, but a more significant change only occurs once every three months when we decide on the main protein and structure of dishes.

Working with aesthetically-filtered ingredients is no doubt challenging but definitely helps to push our creativity. Even after three years of practising dynamic change in Kausmo, it is still a weekly challenge for us to get creative, but it is one that we are committed to. It does keep things exciting for our regulars as well, and it encourages them to return.

### What challenges do this method present to you and the chefs at Kausmo?

When we are informed by importers about what's filtered on a weekly basis, there is a very short lead time for us to decide if we wish to purchase them before the importers have to discard them. At times, some ingredients do not fit into our current menu. In such cases, we might preserve or ferment them, or turn them into sauces and purées for future use. We sometimes incorporate them into artisanal bakes, sauces and spreads sold under our retail arm, Krusty by Kausmo.

### How do you measure success as a chef and as a co-founder at Kausmo?

Success for Kausmo is simply having our guests leave with a greater appreciation for aesthetically-filtered ingredients and learning about the various produce that thrives effortlessly on local soil. We hope to inspire our guests to play a part in reducing the problem of food waste by practising responsible shopping habits and trying to make the most out of the produce that they purchase.





### What would you say to those sceptical about how the menu is created at Kausmo?

At Kausmo, we curate a dining experience with conversations around food. We hope that sceptics can hold their judgement and come to Kausmo with an open mind. We hope to inspire our guests in ways that they can use ingredients at home in their entirety, as well as to appreciate what can be grown in our land.

There are some guests who have reservations about the aesthetically-filtered fruits and vegetables that we used, thinking that they may not be optimal for consumption. We would like to clarify that these ingredients are filtered solely based on retailers' standards, and are not compromised in terms of food quality. For example, we have come across bananas that are still green at the ends but have turned yellow in the centre. These were deemed overripe by retailers as they only accept fully green bananas due to logistical concerns.

### What can Malaysians look forward to in Kausmo when they visit Singapore? What are your personal favourites from the menu?

Our style of cooking is modern European with Asian influences. Our menu changes dynamically based on the ingredients available, so we hope that diners would keep an open mind to experience what we have carefully sourced and put together.

*All images: Kausmo*

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