

# UOB-SMU Entrepreneurship Alliance Centre

## Food & Nutrition Specialists Pte Ltd: Eat Well, Live Better



“Part of the secret of success in life is to eat what you like,” writes Mark Twain. His quote would strike a chord with gourmands and gourmets alike, although where health is concerned, what would health professionals whose job it is to expound the benefits of healthy eating add to that? Well, the team of nutritionists and dieticians

from Food & Nutrition Specialists Pte Ltd do believe that good food and good health can go hand-in-hand. The key is in understanding what good nutrition is all about, and how to fit healthier food choices within your lifestyle.

Established in Singapore in 1989, Food & Nutrition Specialists Pte Ltd has become a leading nutrition company specialising in nutrition consultancy, training and health promotion. Its team of professionals in the fields of dietetics, nutrition, food science and health promotion provides a wide range of strategic and scientific advice to clients in the food manufacturing, food service and healthcare industries. With a broad-based clientele that includes key opinion leaders of industry, government, international non-profit organisations, and scientific and academic institutions, the company contributes its expertise throughout the food industry and its related value chains to enhance the well-being of people.

Similarly, the company's training centre delivers innovative nutrition training and health promotion programmes to a plethora of organisations, professionals and consumers. Bringing together the science of nutrition and the art of food, it aims to equip customers with the right knowledge, skills and confidence to improve their health and well-being through good nutrition and the enjoyment of food.

For a food-loving nation like Singapore, where eating is often cheekily lauded as a national pastime, food establishments seem to spontaneously spawn to feed the insatiable appetites of food-lovers. Unfortunately, essential complementary services like the knowledge of service staff and standard of service have not kept pace. And while more people are gaining awareness of the benefits of healthy eating, more encouragement is still needed for them to take the next step in adopting healthier eating habits.

### **Food, food, glorious food**

Singaporeans are known to travel long distances in search of delectable dishes, with word-of-mouth being by far the most efficient and trusted mode of publicity. Contrary to a general penchant to complain at the slightest provocation, foodies appear to be an exceptionally tolerant lot. So even if a food venue is not easily accessible, the ambience is less than ideal, the wait is very long and the food is unhealthy, it seems that they are happy to turn a blind eye – *as long as the food is tasty*. This is borne out by an SMU survey designed to gain insights into diners' behaviour, service staff and healthy eating.

Although taste is the most important reason behind the respondents' food choices, the good news is that a majority of the respondents have a positive perception of “health” and “nutrition”. They associate healthy or nutritious food as “having more health benefits” as well as “fresh and seasonal ingredients”. And if the healthier food tastes good, most of them would be encouraged to select that food item when they are eating out.

With service staff being the frontline contacts for diners, truly memorable encounters have the potential to translate into return visits. This finding is in line with the national movement to improve service quality and to promote service quality as a key differentiator in today's competitive business landscape. It is therefore

# **UOB-SMU Entrepreneurship Alliance Centre**

not surprising that diners would prefer service staff to be well-versed in all aspects of the menu items, including knowledge of the taste, preparation methods, and the quality or origins of the ingredients.

## **Delectable dishes**

Food & Nutrition Specialists had participated in the SME Consulting Programme managed by the UOB-SMU Entrepreneurship Alliance to obtain a better understanding of the market sentiments and trends in healthy eating, determine the restaurant segment's degree of interest in training, and explore the viability of establishing a new business unit.

The qualitative and quantitative market research designed and managed by three SMU student-consultants provided critical feedback for the company. "I found the information insightful, sometimes surprising, but definitely useful," says the company's Business Development Manager, Ms Yeong Li Yui. "Overall, the team and I worked very well together, and the quality of the end product was good." Although some of the recommendations needed "fine-tuning and further development", she was pleased that her expectations were met.

For the consultants who had only 12 weeks to complete the project, the tight timeline proved to be the biggest challenge, but "the theoretical knowledge and research skills gleaned from the classroom empowered us, and our Project Adviser also played her role to perfection," says Ethan, the student team coordinator. The consultants credited the adviser's enthusiasm and flexibility, which promoted a "dynamic team relationship, thus fostering a conducive environment for experiential learning and independent leadership". That she also played Devil's advocate challenged them to think deeper about their project.

## **Tasty but subtle**

Although the high expectations for the project were not dissimilar to those for an academic project, the consultants were constantly aware that there was "little or no margin for error" as they were working with a real company. Taking direction from Project Adviser, Ms Yeo Ai Ling, the team members proved themselves to be "bright and proactive, with sound opinions," says Ai Ling. Calling the three-month encounter a "fantastic experience", she urges other advisers to clearly set the parameters right at the start of the project to "minimise misunderstandings later". For example, it is crucial to clarify that the student representative is the main point of contact for the client; the Project Adviser will fulfill his or her role in overseeing the project, but will remain very much in the background.

**Project Advisor: Ms Yeo Ai Ling**

**Student Consultants: Chelsea Lim Hui Ying**  
Bachelor of Business Management  
**Ethan Chia Hong Sheng**  
Bachelor of Business Management & Science (Economics)  
**Su Huijun**  
Bachelor of Business Management