

Eat your greens

The future is local, seasonal and sustainable thanks to these chefs who are using their Australian background, creativity, and love of the planet to propel Singapore's green food scene forward.

Sustainable dining may not be new, but the growing urgency of our fight against climate change and the global target of being carbon zero by 2050 means the solution is a collective one.

Thankfully, like-minded people in the hospitality industry have long been driving the change to more sustainable food and beverage options by making changes in their own communities and connecting with others to tackle concerns: Australia and Singapore are one such pairing.

"Singapore is a bona fide foodie nation that is known for its fantastic multicultural cuisine, with much that the world can learn from," says Penny Rafferty, Head of Tourism Australia's Sustainability Strategy. "We see many synergies with Singapore in terms of collaborating on food inspiration and ingredient ideas. Australia prides itself on our diverse range of produce and how our food and wine operators innovate with creative takes on those ingredients. Our farmers and fishermen are passionate about sharing their

knowledge and engage in advocacy for the cause."

The exchange of ideas between Singapore's trailblazing chefs and trendsetters is also exciting, especially when it's driven by F&B development and a more sustainable ecosystem. From regenerative farms to coffee roasters, breweries to bakers, everyone is aiming for a more eco-friendly and positive impact together.

"The question businesses and individuals are asking is no longer 'why'

do we need to be sustainable, but 'how,'" continues Penny.

"As the voice for tourism in Australia, we are looking forward to growing and developing together, sharing the evolution of our sustainable food future, and exchanging stories from across the country with Singapore. We also look forward to learning from Singapore, a country that punches way above its weight in terms of food and innovation."

In light of this, we meet three top chefs in Singapore who are using their Australian backgrounds to pioneer changes and drive the sustainable message ahead within the F&B industry here on the red dot.



Sustainable F&B Explained

"Sustainable F&B is about embedding sustainability in the end-to-end conceptualisation, operation and delivery of an F&B concept. This almost always includes sourcing the best produce from local suppliers, often organically grown and with minimal transport; using renewable sources of energy; and finding other creative solutions to encourage regenerative farming and reduce carbon footprint."

Penny Rafferty, Head of Tourism Australia's Sustainability Strategy

‘We’ve made our menus at least 50% plant-based by constantly adding new vegetarian and vegan dishes’

Chef Jason Jones from Bega, NSW, is the Culinary Director and Co-Owner of Singapore’s Super Loco Group, a Mexican restaurant and bar group that serves authentically-inspired Mexican cuisine with a unique contemporary approach, along with a curated collection of artisanal agave-forward tequila and mezcal.



What does sustainability mean to you?

It means providing a great product and experience with as little impact to the environment as possible. At Super Loco Group we use as much local produce as we can, partnering with regional farms recognised as having the ‘best practices’ – such as our chicken farmers and our sustainably-farmed barramundi supplier. We reduce glass usage through our partnership with ecoSpirits. We’ve also gone zero-plastic by making our delivery packaging fully compostable thanks to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

What sustainable efforts go into your menu?

We try to incorporate under-loved cuts in our carbon-conscious menu to show guests that they are just as delicious as

popular cuts, for example, our Ox Tongue Tacos at Super Loco Robertson Quay.

Tell us about some other ways you champion green issues through F&B?

We have a series of sustainability initiatives (find the list at super-loco.com/locogreensteps.htm) that each address different aspects of sustainability within our kitchens, bars and delivery experience. In addition, we’ve partnered with reforestation technology start-up Green Steps Group to aid reforestation in Borneo’s endangered rainforests through a tree adoption project at our venues.

How easy is it to run an environmentally responsible F&B businesses in Singapore?

It’s not easy at all as most produce in

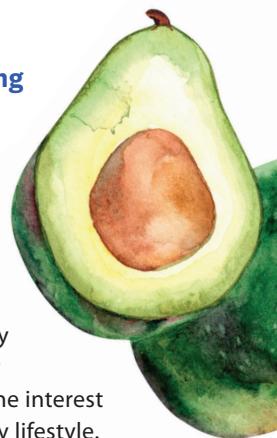
Singapore is imported. The SG Recycling programme could be better. Recycled biodegradable packaging costs more than plastic, making it hard for small businesses to justify the reduced margins. I think food waste needs to go back into the ground to help grow more stuff – every restaurant creates a huge amount of compost that could be used wisely. This being said, vertical farms are starting to help and certain environmental groups are making a solid impact. The government definitely helps these movements with grants and support so I do think the road ahead will see positive changes.

How do your Australian roots influence the dishes you create?

I think the main one is being versatile, and not set in any particular way. In Australia, we don’t have a cuisine that dates back centuries; it’s made of influences from around the world. In my apprentice training days we learned a lot of basic French techniques along with Thai curry, risotto, tagines, chilli crab, schnitzel, guacamole, and so on. So you can imagine, when it comes to creating new Mexican dishes here, we apply our skills in a versatile way that is also (hopefully) appealing.

Do you see diners making greener choices today?

Guests are starting to be more conscious of where and how ingredients are sourced or produced. There also seems to be a growing interest in including plant-based proteins in their dietary lifestyle choices – whether for health reasons, or simply in the interest of leading a more eco-friendly lifestyle. We’ve made our menus at least 50% plant-based by constantly adding new vegetarian and vegan dishes.



How do you stay healthy and well yourself?

I do try to balance the eating game. I like to eat vegan, and I like to eat healthy, but not all the time. If I’ve eaten meat one night, I’ll try not to eat it again for a little while, but how good is fried chicken? Exercise is important, as is rest. Can someone please tell my two little children this?!

super-loco.com [@superlocogroup](https://www.instagram.com/superlocogroup)

‘My time in Australia gave me a creative freedom which is evident in the food at FOOL and Cloudstreet’

Chef Rishi Naleendra is originally from Sri Lanka, but trained in various Australian kitchens, and was the Chef de Partie at the world-renowned Tetsuya's in Sydney. Today he's the Chef-Owner of FOOL, Cloudstreet and Kotuwa in Singapore.



Tell us about the concept for FOOL ...

It was inspired by the amazing and diverse wine-bar scene in Australia, and designed to bring a very different wine and food experience to the diners in Singapore. We not only wanted to challenge the status quo, but also debunk the stigma of stuffiness around wines.

What does sustainability mean to you?

It has always been the core of what we do, be it from culinary offerings, staffing, and the business as a whole. Our wine list is mostly made up of wines from passionate and quality winemakers who practice sustainable winemaking. We have a large portion of organic and biodynamic wines. Supporting local farms and producers on our food menu is something we have

strongly believed in and practiced since day one.

How do you keep FOOL as sustainable as possible?

When the pandemic hit, we were forced to delve into takeaways and deliveries. As such, we sourced biodegradable takeaway containers made from sugarcane pulp and only used paper bags for transporting food. We did away with straws, but have biodegradable ones on standby. In our cocktail programmes, we're receiving our alcohol using the ecoSpirits system, a new spirits distribution technology by Proof & Company that reduces the carbon footprint of the entire spirits life cycle - from field to glass to landfill.

How do you minimise waste?

From utilising the whole animal to using the rinds from fruit, we try our best to keep our waste to a minimum. With the quality of ingredients we use, we cannot afford any wastage, hence we need to be creative with how we use our ingredients. In addition, our food trimmings are kept

and used in our staff meals or used to create tasty snacks for staff.

What are your hopes for sustainable dining here in SG?

We need bigger corporations on board. Singapore is a small country and there is not much land for farming. Vertical farming is developing here for plants and vegetables, but for animal farming there is not enough land for a sustainable resource on a large scale. For mass produced meats, huge chain eateries and fast food chains, cell-based meats or cultured meats might be the future. There is a long way to go but I believe the industry as a whole is moving in the right direction.

Where should our readers go in Australia for sustainable food?

Sunda Dining (sunda.com.au) in Melbourne focus on Southeast Asian cuisine, but use Australian ingredients. Also, Yellow Sydney (yellowsydney.com.au) serve a great full vegetarian menu.

 foolwine.com.sg  [@foolwine.sg](https://www.instagram.com/@foolwine.sg)
 [@rishinaleendra](https://www.instagram.com/@rishinaleendra)

‘It was easy to stop serving straws, and we do our part with recycling and food waste’

Chef Darren Farr was born in Sydney and grew up in Albury. He's taken his culinary skills around the globe including Tetsuya's in Sydney, Peak Café Hong Kong and Mezzo Bar Restaurant London. He worked at Culina Singapore before becoming Chef-Owner of The Lokal.

Tell us about about The Lokal ...

The Lokal is a casual Australian restaurant-bar with an open kitchen concept, and the aim of being like an extension of your home. Our menu comprises honest house-made comfort food from day to night including butter, sauces, pickles and smoked fish, all made on-site with good produce.

How do you keep your business as sustainable as possible?

Sustainability for our restaurant means

being able to operate in a way that has minimal impact on the environment, and also being able to engage and inspire employees to practice good habits that make a difference. There are steps that are easy for us to implement such as not serving straws for our drinks, and offering an incentive to diners who bring their own cup for takeaway orders. We also do our part with recycling and the reduction of food waste.

In what ways do you enforce zero waste in the kitchen?

We try to do this constantly. For instance, buttermilk left over from making our butter is used in our muffins of the day; whey left over from making our ricotta cheese is used to brine our chickens for roasting. We also try to reduce our use of single-use plastics.

Where do you source the ingredients for your menu?

We try to source locally but it's not always easy. We used to source locally-farmed kale in Singapore and it was a fantastic

product, but unfortunately they had to close the farm when Covid-19 hit. Currently on our menu we have Bass Strait Beef, which is Australian grass-fed beef for our steak offerings - this is generally more expensive but we feel customers will pay for good produce.

What needs to change to help F&B become more sustainable?

There are cost barriers to implement when using certain systems or packaging, which can be hard for small businesses. I feel like the general mindset of sustainability in Singapore needs to be changed. Even in our day to day operations, we see so much food wastage from over-ordering. I hope people will change their perspective about what they're eating and become more aware of their choices as well.

How do your Australian roots influence the dishes you create?

Some of the dishes come from memories of growing up in Australia, but I attribute my dishes to years of travelling and working overseas, eating and experiencing many different cultures. Australia in itself is highly multicultural – including in its cuisine – so I take my inspiration from quite a range of multifaceted heritages and sources.

How have dining tastes changed due to the pandemic?

Many of our customers opt for dishes that remind them of home or of their travels, especially since travel has been off limits for so long. I don't see a significant shift in diners choosing healthier or greener dishes, but I must commend our guests for always being willing to bring their own takeaway containers which makes a big difference.

Where do you recommend visitors to Australia should go for great sustainable food?

Three Blue Ducks (threeblueducks.com) is a spot I always hit up. I think what they do is great in terms of sustainability. I'm very envious! **a**

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