

# Meatless meat scene here heats up

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## Meatless meat scene here heats up

Two labs producing plant-based proteins have launched here in the past two weeks as meat alternatives continue to flood the market



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Food Correspondent

It is full speed ahead for Singapore's booming alternative meat scene, with a slew of new products and laboratory openings announced in the past month.

Swiss giants Givaudan and Bühler launched their new Protein Innovation Centre in Woodlands last Monday, while American food-processing company ADM rolled out its new lab in Biopolis on April 22.

Both labs boast state-of-the-art manufacturing capabilities dedicated to producing plant-based proteins, with an emphasis on nutrition as well as flavours that cater to the Asian palate.

Think *ngoh hiang* with plant-based pork, *otah* with plant-based fish and *buah keluak* stuffed with plant-based chicken.

These innovation labs do not produce their own plant-based products. Instead, they function as suppliers for the industry and provide ingredients for start-ups and established brands, as well as product creation and development expertise.

They join the growing number of manufacturing facilities setting up shop here, cementing Singapore's position as a growing hub for meat alternatives.

The Future Ready Food Safety Hub, launched last Tuesday, supports local and overseas agri-food companies to assess food-safety risks and approve novel food products. It is established in collaboration with the Nanyang Technological University, the Singapore Food Agency and the

Agency for Science, Technology and Research.

Up next are a manufacturing facility by home-grown plant-based nutrition company Growthwell Singapore, which will open in July; and a highly anticipated factory by Californian start-up Eat Just, known for its Good Meat cultured chicken bites and plant-based Just Egg.

Hong Kong-based cell-cultivated fish company Avant is recruiting and has assessed "several sites" for its pilot facilities here, says co-founder and chief executive Carrie Chan.

Its set-up here is supported by the Economic Development Board. Besides fish, Avant's animal protein cultivation technology can also produce other meat alternatives.

Ms Chan says: "Our plan is to scale up to produce for the regional markets in the next few years, then export and license our technologies to business partners around the world."

### NEW BRANDS AND EXPANSION

Meanwhile, new meat alternatives continue to flood the market.

Singapore-based food tech company Next Gen Foods launched its plant-based chicken Tindle in March, while Japanese company Next Meats debuted its yakimiku-style sliced meat substitute last month.

To best showcase the soya-based yakimiku meat, Next Meats' chief executive Hideyuki Sasaki collaborated with Japanese restaurant chain Aburi-EN to offer two dishes which are available till July.

The *kalbi* (boneless short rib) don set (\$13.80) features the yakimiku on rice, while *stamina teishoku* (\$15.80) comes with *kalbi* stir-fried with cabbage, rice, salad and miso soup.

Noting that the industry is saturated with plant-based burger patties, Mr Sasaki chose to launch the yakimiku here first.

He says: "We plan to continue working with other institutions and corporations to conduct further research on plant-based proteins, as well as microalgae and cultured meats, so we can replace

all animal-based products." As for Tindle, it is quickly expanding its reach.

More than 16 restaurant partners that offer Tindle dishes are available on GrabFood, including modern Indian restaurant Adda, new virtual brand La Takorea and cloud kitchen burger concept Tigi Roti.

Similarly, Eat Just's Good Meat cultured chicken is available on foodpanda till Thursday, in collaboration with members' club 1880.

Among the dishes are *katsu* chicken curry with jasmine rice and chicken Caesar salad. Eat Just and foodpanda will partner JW Marriott Hotel Singapore South Beach later this month.

Also launching this month is Arlene, by Singapore-based founder Helene Raudaschl, who is a director for gourmet food supplier Indoguna.

It offers frozen ready meals, many of which use plant-based OmniMeat. They include Bolognese with Spaghettoni, vegetable dumpling with Szechuan Sauce, spicy *kebab* and *siew mai*.

The meals – manufactured in Arlene's 60,000 sq ft factory in Dubai – will be available at Cold Storage supermarkets, as well as plant-based concept store Green Common and Grand Hyatt hotel.

After Singapore, it will roll out in the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and North America.

Other plant-based brands to look out for are the 15 start-ups under an accelerator programme by Singapore- and New York-based venture capital and accelerator firm Big Idea Ventures.

Companies to watch in Southeast Asia include tempoh specialist Angie's Tempeh; GreenGourmet Foods, which makes plant-based dairy products; plant-based yogurt brand Wellme; plant-based beverage company Mad Foods; and Haofood, which makes plant-based chicken from peanuts.

Orleio Coffee + Bar's meat-substitute offerings are (from left) Jack's Tuna Melt, a tuna spin on the Karana jackfruit; Om(gni) Goodness, a quesadilla with fried Omni luncheon; Mission Impossible Burger, a Ramly-style burger, in which the Impossible meat patty is wrapped in cheese and omelette; and The Tindle Surprise burger, which features a breaded Tindle patty stuffed with pesto and mozzarella.



### RESTAURANT TIE-UPS

The industry is also boosted by growing support from restaurants that are expanding or adding plant-based menus.

Establishments that champion plant-based cuisine include the Prive Group, Three Buns, Vegan-Burg and Little Farms.

On Tuesday, two more restaurants will add plant-based dishes to their menus for a limited time.

Orleio Coffee + Bar in Somerset will offer four meat substitutes until Aug 2.

The Tindle Surprise burger (\$22+) features a breaded Tindle patty stuffed with pesto and mozzarella; while the Mission Impossible Burger (\$24+) is a Ramly-style burger in which the Impossible meat patty is wrapped in cheese and omelette.

The other two options are Om(gni) Goodness (\$18++), a quesadilla with fried Omni luncheon; and Jack's Tuna Melt (\$24++), a tuna spin on the Karana jackfruit that is usually used as a pulled pork replacement.

At ramen restaurant chain Ippudo, a vegan-friendly plant-based ramen Akamaru 1.0 (\$16.85, \$18.85 at Marina Bay Sands outlet)

– which resembles the original meat version – will be available till June 30 at its eight outlets.

Eggless, whole wheat noodles are served with a broth made with mushrooms and soya milk, and topped with ingredients such as black fungus and two slices of meat-free char siew made by Growthwell Singapore.

The dish took six to eight months to perfect, says Ippudo Singapore's general manager Masaki Ogawa, with more iterations when the restaurant refines it based on feedback from diners.

At Ippudo restaurants in Japan, a similar version of this plant-based ramen launched earlier this year for a limited period.

Growthwell's meatless char siew will be available in other restaurants later.

Aside from restaurant collaborations, the company will launch an improved version of its plant-based seafood alternatives by July, along with meatless fish sticks, nuggets and patties.

Under its Gomama label, it will also roll out a range of Asian cuisine-inspired plant-based meals and dim sum items.

Executive director Justin Chou is also working on a plant-based dairy and nutritional drink using a chickpea protein isolate made in partnership with Israeli food-tech start-up ChickP.

He foresees further growth for the alternative meat market in Asia, saying it is still in the early stages.

"We believe the future will see an emphasis on what plants have to offer as consumers are increasingly looking for more options," he adds.

"Plant-based meals, snacks and nutritional drinks with a more complete nutritional spectrum are areas we expect a lot of new development."

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American food-processing company ADM rolled out its new laboratory (left) in Biopolis on April 22 and Swiss giants Givaudan and Bühler launched their new Protein Innovation Centre (right) in Woodlands last Monday. Both laboratories boast state-of-the-art manufacturing capabilities dedicated to producing plant-based proteins.



(Above) Japanese restaurant Aburi-EN's *kalbi* don set, which showcases soya-based yakimiku meat. PHOTOS: ORLEIO COFFEE + BAR, ABURI-EN, NG SOR LUAN, GIVAUDAN SINGAPORE



Mr Vishal Vijay, director of HerbVore, plans to take the brand into other markets such as India, Canada, Australia and the United States, where there is strong demand for vegan food. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY