

# Malaysia's food heritage in a packet

Care Food Industries' model is to preserve the indigenous flavors of Malaysia, writes **CRISTINA DOUTHWAITE**



Care Food offers some 200 varieties of sauces and these are free of preservatives, artificial ingredients, MSG, 3-MCPD and genetically modified products

**M**ALAYSIA'S strong food culture is reflected in Care Food Industries' ethos of creating myriad flavors, textures, aromas and color using natural ingredients, according to Sales and Marketing manager Angela Ng. The company produces the AsianMeals range of sauces and ready meals which are sold to worldwide markets.

## How long have you been in the ready meals and sauces business?

We started research and development way back in 1989 and designed and built our own factory in 1993. Our founder had a vision that our Malaysian food heritage would be eroded and so he set out to establish this manufacturing plant to preserve the Malaysian/Asian food heritage

## Since then how many products have you introduced to the market?

To date, we have over three hundred products addressing the food service industry as well as the retail market.

We offer a wide range of sauces—more than 200 different varieties in fact—including simmer sauces, stir fries, marinades, dips, salad dressings, soups, and condiments. Our Malaysian stir fry sauces include black pepper sauce, lemongrass curry sauce, satay sauce, mango sauce and pineapple sauce.

We also offer soup bases, Malaysian and Vietnamese noodles, and vegetarian entrées.



*“With the right processing, ready meals with comparable levels of nutrition as fresh food can be produced”*

— **Angela Ng**  
Sales and Marketing manager, Care Food Industries Sdn Bhd

Popular Malaysian flavors include items like Rendang, Sambal Tumis, Black Pepper, Chicken/meat curry, stir fry sauce and Asam Pedas (sour and spicy stew).

We aim to produce wholesome food and to do this we use the best available ingredients. We do not use MSG, preservatives, artificial colors and flavors, 3-MCPD and genetically modified products.

## What makes your products stand out from the rest?

Our 20 years of experience in the business helps us understand the intricacies of Asian food, creating the right balance of flavors and texture to satisfy our clients. Our products are classified in the United States as “clean and natural”. We are consistent in our quality and we pride ourselves in producing authentic tastes that meet international standards.

## Does Care Food export most of its products? What certification/standards are specific to your markets?

Over 85 % of our production is intended for the export market.

We export to the United States, Canada, Australia, China, and Singapore. Soon we will also be exporting to Dubai and Indonesia, and plans are underway to export to some European countries in the coming year.

We are certified Halal, and for international safety standards, we are certified for HACCP, ISO 9000, 22000, and GMP.

## What are the common areas for innovation to attract buyers?

Some areas of food quality concerns now go beyond preservative free. There are other concerns like salt content, sugar, and gluten for example. An awareness of consumer tastes and preferences is critical

for us to continue to maintain our position in the industry.

## Are there new projects underway?

We continue to find ways and means to improve in terms of quantity (productivity) as well as quality. We continue to address the increasing needs of customers who are looking for safe and healthy food. Also, product development is a continuous program for us. We will be launching new flavors as well as new Halal products for the Food Service industry.

## How would you describe the Asian market for ready meals?

The lack of time for the urban households for traditional home cooking is driving the market. Demand is increasing for products that would simplify the shopping process and allow people to prepare a meal easily and in less time.

Migration also plays a role in the increasing demand for ethnic meals. People who go overseas miss the “taste of home” and ready meals and sauces made from traditional recipes fulfill this demand.

In addition, globalization is driving many consumers to go for new sensory experiences – to enjoy the taste of something new and exotic. Ready meals can satisfy this niche in the market.

## What trends do you foresee in the industry?

There will be more demand for quality and this challenge is confronted against a backdrop of increasing labor problems.

## What recent development is influencing food production?

A growing number of consumers are more concerned with what they eat. It has to be safe and healthy. With the right

processing ready meals with comparable levels of nutrition as fresh food can be produced.

## What support is needed to develop the local industry?

As our country was basically a commodity export country focused on tin, rubber and palm oil, production and promotion of our traditional Malaysian cuisines were not a priority and were not done aggressively until recently. Malaysia, in fact, can offer much more than our

neighbors in terms of variety and taste. A more concerted effort is needed to support the manufacturers as well as the exporters to gain market penetration as well as to improve productivity and quality.

In Malaysia, we have all the traditional flavors as well as fusion flavors in a cosmopolitan society of many Asian and Western cultures within the country. We have Malay, Chinese, Indian, Portuguese, Dutch and British influences in our cuisine and so we have a lot to offer in terms of variety. In reality, Malaysia is a food paradise!

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