

Café Conversations

VINCENT TAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR SELECT GROUP LTD, IS TANTALISING SINGAPORE WITH A WHOLE NEW SIDE TO JAPANESE DINING, **MICHEALLE TORRES** REPORTS

PHOTO: SIMON SIM

When you think about Tokyo, images of a vibrant, bustling city immediately come to mind. The Japanese capital is known for its hectic pace, so much so that its inhabitants even rank among the top five of the “fastest-walking people” in the world. Having a relaxed, chill-out concept for a Japanese restaurant is a stark contrast to this lifestyle but that is exactly what Vincent Tan is doing with his company’s latest F&B endeavour — A971 Café. Originally from Tokyo, the franchise was a joint venture between Japan’s Café Company and Select Café Pte Ltd, a subsidiary brand of the Select Group Ltd where Tan is managing director. A971 Café’s cosy interior evokes a relaxed mood and its plush sofas are perfect for kicking-back and de-stressing, while enjoying the riverside views. “I find the concept very unique,” Tan shares when asked why he decided to bring the F&B franchise to local shores. “I wanted to introduce contemporary Japanese cuisine with a chill-out concept in Singapore, which is something new to the market and the Singapore River location.”

With over 18 years of experience in the F&B industry, Tan has been instrumental in the establishment, development and expansion of the Select Group. And aside from his involvement in A971 Café, he is also keeping himself busy with the newly opened Klapsons boutique hotel and an exciting new concept, which is in the works with Resort World. Looking back, Tan recalls that it was never his intention to get into the food industry. “I was not F&B trained,” he says. “Getting into this industry cannot be considered as planned. But I have always wanted to have my own business and seeing that food is a basic requirement for everyone, I chose the F&B industry.”

Today, the Select Group is one of the leading food service providers in Singapore and has ventured into hotel management, off-shore catering, and as illustrated by the A971 Café, concept dining, all of which has added to the company’s success. “For those who want to get into this industry, one must have passion for the business,” Tan advises. “There will be long working hours, plenty of issues and challenges, as well as the need to solve many problems you encounter along the way. But we need to continue to be productive and come up with more innovative ideas.”



TALKING BUSINESS

I am driven by... the growth of the company.
I owe my success to... a team of dedicated staff.
Customers need... 101 percent customer satisfaction!

INSPIRATIONS

I am inspired by... seeing a business idea become a reality and becoming successful.
My favourite pastime is... having good, quality time with my family.

SINGAPORE LIVING

If I could eat any local food every day, it would be... fish soup or fish porridge (the healthier choice).
Living in Singapore has taught me... to progress with time and to give equal opportunity for everyone.