

Coping WITH COVID-19



THE PANDEMIC HAS BROUGHT ON UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES FOR MANY SMALL LOCAL BUSINESSES, BUT SOME ARE REINVENTING THEMSELVES TO EMERGE STRONGER FROM THIS CRISIS.

This year's COVID-19 calamity has necessitated the calibration of survival strategies for business owners, with a growing number reaching out to consumers in innovative ways.

JW Korean Food Story
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[www.facebook.com/
JWKoreanFoodStory](https://www.facebook.com/JWKoreanFoodStory)

While there is no shortage of Korean eateries nowadays, halal Korean cuisine in a coffee shop setting is relatively hard to come by. Recognising the demand, Muslim owner and chef Safwan Kamal, who formerly worked at Pan Pacific Hotel and JW Marriott Hotel, started JW Korean Food Story at a *kopitiam* in Ghim Moh. The stall relocated to Sixth Avenue in September this year.

Some of its most highly rated dishes include Char-Spicy Chicken Ramen and Sweet Soy Sauce Grilled Beef. Its signature item, Army Stew Steamboat, comes with free-flow soup, a heap of

meats and vegetables as well as *ramyeon* (quick-cooking noodles). The *kimchi* (fermented vegetables) is also made in-house.

To counter the impact of COVID-19, JW Korean Food Story promptly introduced "Circuit Breaker set meals" and islandwide delivery service. The stall has its own Facebook and Instagram pages to promote its menu items, while orders are accepted via WhatsApp. Although dining in is now allowed with safe distancing measures in place, birthday set packages with free delivery are still available to cater to those who prefer staying home.

“The food served is fresh and delicious. We ordered the seafood and chicken hotpot, which has a generous amount of meat, clams and prawns. The dish can be shared among two to three people. Highly recommended!”

– MOHAMMAD FAIZAL, FACEBOOK USER



Jixing Tonic

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During the Circuit Breaker, retailers had to come up with alternative ways to keep their businesses going despite shuttering their physical stores. One homegrown brand that has turned to social media and e-commerce platforms is Jixing Tonic, a local distributor of herbal medicines, tonics and supplements.

Besides setting up a virtual shop on popular online shopping website Lazada, Jixing Tonic regularly conducts Facebook Live broadcasts to share about the use and benefits of their products. To further engage their followers, giveaways and promotions are also scheduled frequently. This has gained them many repeat customers, who leave numerous positive reviews on their Facebook page.



“The quality of Jixing’s products is excellent. Their soup bags are so tasty! I won’t repurchase from a shop if the products are not good. This is already my third time buying from them. There are even gifts with purchase!”

– CHANEL, FACEBOOK USER

Gu Xiang Yuan

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Beyond the elderly, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has been steadily gaining popularity among younger consumers in recent years. This has prompted retailers like Gu Xiang Yuan to supplement their business online, and the move has proved fruitful. “The average monthly growth for the online business is 10 percent,” said Ms Amy Ho, director and manager, in a *The Straits Times* interview.

Gu Xiang Yuan’s brick-and-mortar store, which opened in 2018, is located in an Ang Mo Kio residential block. The limited number of walk-in customers and a skyrocketing online shopping industry led Gu Xiang Yuan to explore various e-commerce platforms, including Shopee, Qoo10, Lazada, Taobao, and eBay. Having a presence on these online shopping sites has helped expand its customer base to places as far as China, India, and the United States. Orders can also be placed via communication apps, such as WhatsApp and WeChat.

Over on Facebook, the brand has also tapped on live streaming to interact with its audiences, with product showcases accompanied by exclusive offers that are available only during these sessions.



“There are many products online, but overseas customers are attracted to those made in Singapore because of our stringent regulations. They know that items with the Singapore brand have quality assurance and are safe for consumption.”

– MS AMY HO, DIRECTOR AND MANAGER OF
GU XIANG YUAN