

Inside SATS: Innovation, culinary excellence and a team culture that endures



Jeremy Clark, *PAX International* Asia Correspondent (third from left) with SATS team of chefs

At [SATS Catering](#) in Singapore, longevity and dedication go hand in hand. Chef Mahendran, a fixture in the kitchen since the late 1980s, continues to lead with culinary excellence more than three decades later. His commitment is not only admired by colleagues but also emblematic of the team-first culture that defines SATS.

Following its impressive showing at the PAX Readership Awards in April—where the company took home its seventh award—SATS extended an invitation to *PAX International* to visit its operations during the Inflight Food & Catering Conference (IFCC) in Singapore. The visit offered a firsthand look into the innovation and strategy that continue to drive SATS forward.

The tour began with an introduction by Wong Yoon Nee, Head of Business Development and Trade Marketing, alongside Jean Sin, Vice President of Innovation and Product Development, and Adeline Tan, Head of Marketing. Also present was Carolyn Khiu, Head of Corporate Affairs, who would later offer insight into SATS's sustainability initiatives and global image.

No visit to an inflight catering unit is complete without meeting the chefs. Executive Chef Khairril Azzard, responsible for meals served to foreign carriers and non-airline customers, and Chef Christophe Crot, who oversees catering for SATS shareholder and national carrier Singapore Airlines, shared their expertise and passion for cuisine.



Jeremy Clark, *PAX International* Asia Correspondent (left) with Executive Chef Khairril Azzard, during the SATS tour

A product presentation followed, showcasing SATS's diverse offerings—from traditional cook-chill Economy Class meals and frozen premium cabin kits to ambient meals with up to two years of shelf life. While airline catering remains SATS's core business, the company has significantly expanded into other markets, including HORECA, general hospitality, hospitals, schools and retail.

"We focus a lot of time and resources on the development of not just recipes and new dishes but on the best production, conservation, packaging solutions to meet the demands of an ever more diverse market," explains Jean Sin.

She, along with Yoon Nee and Tan, highlighted opportunities in the ambient meal and frozen meal markets. With advances in freezing techniques, frozen meals are increasingly popular with airlines for logistical and cost-saving advantages.

SATS's culinary philosophy is grounded in cultural authenticity. Whether Indian, Japanese, Indonesian, Korean, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai or Western cuisine, dishes are crafted with regional accuracy. SATS is true to its roots, notes Tan, emphasizing that regional culinary expertise is a key differentiator for SATS in a rapidly growing market.



From Indian and Japanese to Indonesian, Korean, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, and Western fare, each dish is prepared with authentic regional precision

During a pre-lunch discussion with *PAX International*, SATS CEO Stanley Goh brought the company's broader business strategy into focus. Goh expressed pride in the company's achievements and commitment to food safety and quality, which he said were central to winning seven PAX Readership Awards.

When asked about responding to long airline planning cycles, Goh pointed to SATS's Global Innovation Hub. "This looks at all the current and possible future trends in food production, popularity and food culture across all demographics and markets and filters out what is suitable or not depending on the customer need," he said.

The hub works closely with R&D to anticipate market shifts and provide tailored solutions. One such project involved partnering with local hawker food operators to replicate authentic hawker cuisine at scale—an example of SATS's attention to culinary heritage and innovation.

With more than 130 airline customers, SATS has also ramped up diversification efforts. "We are already delivering to and expanding our reach into hospitals, schools and event retail using our multi-channel approach," says Goh.



SATS CEO Stanley Goh (front middle) with the SATS Singapore team

Supporting this expansion is the company's Culinary Knowledge Bank (CKB), a comprehensive database of detailed, standardized procedures for producing each dish. The CKB includes demonstrations, ingredient specifications, equipment used and preparation environments to ensure consistent quality.

Goh also outlined SATS's international strategy. "We are very focused now on synergizing our overseas operations with the Singapore hub," he said. SATS's footprint includes locations across Asia—from India to Japan—and its acquisition of Monty's Bakehouse provides a strategic base in Europe. Singapore remains the company's R&D and innovation hub, while other regions focus on production, particularly for frozen meals. A new facility in Thailand will soon produce up to 108,000 frozen meals per day.

While Asia remains SATS's key focus, the company maintains joint ventures in China, including Beijing, Nanjing, Tianjin and Macau.

"The China domestic market has grown at a phenomenal rate, but we have yet to see international travel return fully," he says. "Our focus is to work closely with our Chinese partners and by retaining our core value propositions, support them where we see opportunities."

LUNCH MENU

Smoked Salmon Parcel
with Crab Salad

Chicken Meatball Congee

Oriental Treasure Rice

Singapore Laksa

Wagyu Beef Yakiniku

Dhania Murgh, Dal Makhani,
Cumin Rice

Dal Curry with Basmati Rice

Pandan Gula Melaka Cake

Red Bean Treasure
Osmanthus Flower Jelly

The lunch menu during Jeremy Clark's tour of SATS Catering in Singapore

The visit concluded with a degustation lunch that highlighted the spectrum of SATS's culinary capabilities. Noteworthy dishes included a Singapore Laksa crafted for frozen logistics without compromising flavour and an Osmanthus Jelly dessert, the result of six months of R&D to ensure shelf stability and authentic taste.

The final stop was the SATS lounge in Changi Airport's Terminal 2, where Khiu discussed SATS's visibility in consumer-facing operations. Unlike its B2B catering business, SATS's lounges serve as a public touchpoint, making sustainability a key area of focus.

On sustainability, Khiu says, "There is still so much more we need to do to minimize waste and recycle better." SATS is actively working to address these challenges while educating consumers on the true meaning of sustainability.

The visit offered a comprehensive view of SATS's enduring values, innovative edge and regional expertise. From CEO Stanley Goh's strategic vision to the tireless efforts of Mahendran and the wider team, it is clear that SATS is poised to meet the evolving demands of inflight catering and more—without losing sight of its roots.

Find more pictures from the tour below:









