

PAX International Asia Report



In times like these, as the “forgotten army” of caterers struggle with little or no help from governments or industry, they have been busy re-inventing themselves. This has resulted in a number of interesting attempts to maintain some semblance of a business especially here in Asia.

With the exception of China, infection numbers here are relatively low when compared to Europe or the United States. Nonetheless, the level of paranoia is the same, or worse, as governments haplessly flail around looking for ways to address the issues.

Meanwhile, businesses have taken matters into their own hands and begun to re-invent models. [SriLankan Catering](#) launched “Cuisine Gastronomer” producing specially branded and created international specialties including Pasta in Sundried Tomato Sauce, Thai Sweet Chilli Fish with Noodles, Cannelloni stuffed with Chicken, Cacciatore Italiano and English Lamb & Mint Pie among the choices.

We have reported here on [dnata’s efforts to feed the thousands of migrant workers](#) in facilities in Singapore; and Vietnam’s caterers are also producing for the local retail markets.

Now, turning to airline food and those who actually serve it. It’s interesting to note, given often negative observations made about “airplane food” that one airline is so confident of its investment into onboard hospitality, it is offering the experience to the public – who literally have nowhere to go.

[Singapore Airlines](#), which has been hard hit by the Covid Chaos now hosts a dining experience aboard its A380s. It is part of a series of initiatives, for the public while overseas travel remains unavailable, to experience something they might not otherwise be able to afford. Two aircraft have been deployed₁

for the dining experience, and guests take up half of the seats in each aircraft.

Diners have the choice of the six seats in Suites, 78 in Business Class, 44 in Premium Economy and a number in Economy Class. They are served lunch in a cabin of their choice for three hours and can choose from SIA's signature international cuisine as well as from a special [Peranakan](#) menu designed by Singaporean chef [Shermay Lee](#).

Prices range from S\$50 for economy to S\$600 for Suites. Apparently tickets sold out in a matter of minutes when made available. This either demonstrates just how good Singapore Airlines food really is, or a level of boredom among the would-be travellers that extends to a willingness to sit for three hours in Economy, and not actually go anywhere. Apparently it went so well that the airline is now saying: "We are currently looking into accommodating all who have made reservations, as well as potentially some of those on the waitlist, for this unique dining experience."

One self-declared "avgeek" who has not yet had a Raffles Class experience said he'd heard good things about SIA and "Perhaps that's what drew me to try (for the tickets)," he said. It is however, a testament to the years of consistent investment in its onboard products that an airline can confidently sell it without actually transporting its customers anywhere.

As [British Airways](#) finally announces its departure from [Marks & Spencer](#) and also farewell to the man who introduced it, hopefully a story like this resonates.

To Heathrow for dinner anyone?