

**LUXURY IN ASIA: A NEW FRONTIER**

Hear from luxury lifestyle experts **Ho Kwon Ping, Paul Harris, Aw Kah Peng, Manoj Murjani** and **Ravi Thakran** in the first-ever Singapore Tatler conference on marketing to the Asian luxury buyer.

**Location:** The St Regis Singapore - John Jacob Hallroom  
**Date:** 5 October 2011, Wednesday

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)



**Singapore**

# ASIATATLER

Subscribe to our eNewsletter

- HOMEEVENTSSTORIES & VIDEOSTHE 300 LISTSUBSCRIBE
- LATEST STORIESLATEST VIDEOSARTS & CULTUREFEATURESHOMESHOW TOPEOPLESTYLETOP 5TRAVELLERWATCHES & JEWELLERYWEDDINGSWINE & DINE

## EVENTS



**Opening of Porsche Design Store at Marina Bay Sands**



**Bulgari Mediterranean Eden Showcase**



**Steinway Gallery Singapore Grand Opening**

[VIEW ALL EVENTS](#)

## THE 300 LIST

The definitive list of who's who in Singapore...



**GAN SEE KHEM**

[VIEW THE FULL LIST](#)

## TOP STORIES

### Made in Singapore: 9 Local Brands That Make Us Proud

*In conjunction with National Day, we profile some of Singapore's top brands and the people behind them*

BY EILEEN CHAN  
01 AUG 12:30

In the spirit of celebrating all things local this month of National Day, we profile nine Singaporean companies and the people that have driven the business to find success not just in Singapore, but across the globe.

**Banyan Tree Holdings**  
Founders: **Claire Chiang and Ho Kwon Ping**



Banyan Tree is a brand familiar to luxury travellers, currently enjoying a strong presence in 28 countries. Ho Kwon Ping and Claire Chiang established the first Banyan Tree resort in Phuket in 1995 with just seven staff members. And while it took thirteen years for them to own their second location, Banyan Tree has since experienced tremendous growth, with 9000 employees today. Commenting on Banyan Tree's Singapore base, Ho says, "The hotel industry is global in nature, so positioning ourselves as a global niche player steeped in Asian tradition is more strategic and spot-on."



*Banyan Tree Spa at Marina Bay Sands*

Last month saw yet another milestone, with the opening of Singapore's first Banyan Tree Spa, at Marina Bay Sands. The first Singaporean to attain the ACA Lifetime Creative Achievement Award, Ho, together with Chiang, has plans to grow the company to 157 hotels, resorts and spas in 33 countries by 2014.

**ON SALE NOW!**

available at major bookstores and newsstands

**ASIATATLER DINING**

ASIATATLERDINING.COM

**FOLLOW US**

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

YOUTUBE

**BreadTalk Group**  
**Founder: George Quek**



It has been a long entrepreneurial journey for George Quek, from selling dragon beard candy in Taiwan to founding the US\$240 million revenue-generating behemoth BreadTalk Group in 2000. Before BreadTalk, Singapore was scattered with neighbourhood bakeries offering run-of-the-mill items, and it took Quek's vision to see the potential of making bread a lifestyle concept, presenting a unique selection and sleek stores which revolutionised the food and beverage industry.



*BreadTalk Floss Buns*

Following BreadTalk's success, Quek has continued to roll out new concepts such as Toast Box, RamenPlay, Food Republic and successful franchise Din Tai Fung. "One of the biggest challenges," he remarks, "is definitely the process of taking the company to the next level; from a local firm to an international organisation spanning 16 countries today." Quek has no time to rest on his laurels - in BreadTalk's largest market, China, he plans to open 500 bakeries by 2013. He remains humble, saying, "We are learning every day to make the concepts of the BreadTalk Group a continued part of our consumers' lives, by evolving our concepts and products to ensure they are always creative, engaging and relevant to the times."

**Hyflux**  
**Founder: Olivia Lum**



As founder and CEO, Olivia Lum has grown Hyflux from the fledgling water treatment startup it was 22 years ago to a publicly listed corporation. But success didn't come easily - at age 28, Lum sold her apartment and car and started selling water treatment systems along the Malaysian peninsula off the back of a motorcycle. Realising the company would only be scalable if she went into manufacturing, she brought in membrane technology and set up water plants in clients' factories during the mid-nineties. The firm soon won a groundbreaking S\$250 million contract to build and operate Singapore's first seawater desalination plant, and was one of the earliest industry pioneers in China, having succeeded in building China's largest desalination plant.



Winner of the prestigious 2011 Ernest & Young World Entrepreneur of the Year award, Lum is still setting her sights high - Hyflux has recently been signed on to build the world's largest seawater reverse osmosis desalination plant in Algeria.

**Osim**  
**Founder: Ron Sim**



"Sim" is my surname, and the 'O' is actually the globe," says Ron Sim, founder and chief executive of Osim International, when asked about the origins of his namesake brand. The name is fitting, given how this specialised retailer of home health care products has grown since its first shop in 1986 to having more than 1,100 outlets across 360 cities. Sim attributes the brand's success to having consolidated products manufactured by different companies under the Osim brand, and focusing its marketing strategy on improving the health of its customers.



Bouncing back from being nearly driven to bankruptcy during the 1985 recession, Sim's is a remarkable success story, having subsequently transformed the company to a reputable health and wellness brand. No expense is spared when it comes to raising Osim's brand profile, and internationally renowned Asian celebrities such as Chinese actress Gong Li and Hong Kong star Andy Lau have graced the brand's advertising campaigns.

#### **Raoul**

**Founders: Odile and Douglas Benjamin**



Odile and Douglas Benjamin first started Raoul as a men's shirt label, and it has since evolved into a rising homegrown brand on the international front. They confide that when the brand first launched in the US, most department stores felt that while Raoul's products were of designer quality, it was hard for buyers to decide where to place the brand as they were priced significantly lower than the other designer brands. Both founders commented that international receptiveness toward Singapore

brands has been steadily on the rise, and that the world is now more ready for an Asian fashion legacy, with designers like Philip Lim and Alexander Wang paving the way.



*Raoul Fall/Winter 2011 Collection*

Odile Benjamin strongly believes in building Raoul's brand image by adhering to its promise of high quality apparel at moderate prices. "We have remained true to the brand's DNA," she remarked, "and that transcends through the product, design, price, marketing, public relations and the channels that represent Raoul."

**Spa Esprit Group**  
**Founder: Cynthia Chua**



Founder and managing director of Spa Esprit Group, Cynthia Chua, oversees a beauty and wellness giant today, having opened her first spa outlet in Holland Village in 1996. Back then, she broke the stereotypical mould of a typical spa, introducing one with eclectic interiors and quirky beauty treatments. Bolstered by humorous and innovative marketing campaigns, Chua went on to launch a waxing salon, Strip, a huge achievement considering the social taboos about waxing at the time.



Spurred by her success, she developed several new ventures including food concepts Skinny Pizza and Tippling Club. Spa Esprit now has a burgeoning clientele spanning several continents and has received dazzling reviews from the international media. She is particularly proud of her London and New York outlets, citing them as great achievements for the company as they have been able to "take a Western product, fine tune it in Asia and reimport the brands back into key fashion cities." Chua's success can be attributed to her passion. She firmly believes that "you have to love what you do and have strong beliefs in the brand. Don't engage in a concept just for cash, you must have genuine interest and love in the subject matter."

**Thai Express**  
**Founders: Ivan Lee and Dellen Soh**





Noting the absence of Thai franchises among casual eateries in Singapore despite popular demand for the cuisine, Ivan Lee and Dellen Soh opened the first Thai Express outlet in Holland Village in 2002. The restaurant proved to be a hit and within a period of eight years, Thai Express expanded to nearly 100 stores across the Asia-Pacific region including Mongolia, Australia and China.



The company went on to develop other brands including Xin Wang Hong Kong Café, New York New York, and Shokudo. By 2008, business was booming and Lee and Soh sold 70 per cent of the business to Thai-listed conglomerate Minor International, valuing the company at \$114 million. Soh, who is currently at the helm of Thai Express expressed his dedication to the company's future. "As we continue to work towards strengthening our brand in Singapore through constant innovations and revamps, we have our eye set for overseas expansion too. We hope to see Thai Express open stores in East Asia, be it through franchising or through the setup of equity stores."

**Tung Lok Group**  
**Founder: Andrew Tjioe**



Established in 1984, the Tung Lok Group is recognised as Singapore's leading restaurant chain which offers distinct and multi-sensory dining concepts. Led by founder Andrew Tjioe, the company owns and manages over 30 restaurants across the region. Driven by the success of the group's flagship, Tung Lok Restaurant, he went on to open other upscale Chinese restaurants, of which many are still in business after more than 18 years.



The company has since expanded to Japan, India, Indonesia and China. Fortunately, in the process of taking the brand overseas, he found that Singapore enjoys a good reputation. "Being known as a Singaporean brand gives diners confidence," says Tjioe, as it equates to having "superb quality cuisine, reputable brands and professional management". In February 2008, he won the prestigious International Star Diamond Lifetime Achievement Award by American Academy of Hospitality Sciences for his success and contribution to the industry. Looking ahead, Tjioe says, "We will be expanding at a pace that we are comfortable with. We are not compelled to chase numbers."

#### **TWG Tea Company**

**Founders: Manoj Murjani and Taha Bouqdbib**



A chance meeting at the historic teahouse Mariage Frères in Paris between Manoj Murjani and Taha Bouqdbib sparked a lively conversation about tea, which would eventually lead to the creation of luxury brand TWG Tea. It was the perfect partnership - Murjani's family was in the luxury fashion industry, and Bouqdbib came armed with 15 years of experience in the tea business. Singapore, boasting of a rich heritage as a port for the tea trade and close proximity to the tea-growing capitals of Asia, was their preferred location to launch the brand. Served in the front cabins of Singapore Airlines and in the best hotels on the island, TWG Tea quickly rose to prominence worldwide - in its first full year it sold 650 tons of tea and by 2009, had turned profitable. The rising brand reached another milestone when food chain Dean & DeLuca brought the brand to US markets and Harrods added the brand to its tea emporium in London.

The brand recently celebrated the opening of its 'Garden' Salon and Boutique at Marina Bay Sands, their largest retail space thus far, with plans for a tea academy and tea museum for TWG Tea in the next few years.



*TWG Tea Garden Salon and Boutique at Marina Bay Sands*

*Read about more individuals who are putting Singapore on the map, in Singapore Tatler's August 2011 issue.*