

## Brisk sales for Singapore cafe guide



Mr Jerome Lim and Mr James Miller chatting with Straits Times journalists Janice Heng (left) and Charissa Yong at the book launch at Books Actually in Tiong Bahru. PHOTO: TIFFANY GOH FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

🕒 PUBLISHED JUN 24, 2016, 5:00 AM SGT

Cheryl Lin ✉️ (mailto:ckylin@sph.com.sg)

A home-grown cafe guide, *Cafe SG: A Cafe Lover's Guide To Singapore*, has seen brisk sales, with more than 1,400 copies sold since its debut on June 6 - and a second print run may be on the cards.

Ms Fiona Chan, 34, editor of the book and deputy managing editor of *The Straits Times*, said: "The numbers are good, considering we haven't even had that much publicity. I think it's testament to the gap in the market for a book like this - something that appeals to people who love coffee and cafes, both as connoisseurs and as casual drinkers."

The Singapore guide to 50 of the country's best cafes, published by Straits Times Press, was introduced at the Singapore Coffee Festival earlier this month.

It was written by seven journalists from *The Straits Times* newsroom, all younger than 30, along with Ms Chan.

"We wanted young people because they write in a casual way. They know the cafe scene and they're interested in coffee and food," she said.

She added that the guide aims to put Singapore on a par with other dynamic cafe-centric cities such as London, Tokyo and Melbourne, all of which have cafe guides of their own.

The guide describes what to expect at each cafe, with details such as the espresso machines used, the origin of the coffee beans, prices of coffee, walking directions and opening hours.

It also features an MRT map for an easy overview of the cafes locations across the island.

"We envision this as a comprehensive guide and as a good read, which is important to us as journalists. It's not just a slapdash directory - it's conscientiously written," Ms Chan added.

However, with a swift current of new cafes sprouting up and struggling ones shuttering, what makes a good cafe - and what makes it last?

The consensus among the authors is that good food and coffee are a prerequisite.

However, to some, a relaxed atmosphere is also essential.

Political desk reporter Charissa Yong, 26, said: "There must be enough space to sit and hang out without being judged or having to leave because it's so crowded."

Service is also key to a good cafe experience, added Ms Pearl Lee, 28, who is also from the political desk.

"If the staff are polite and chat with you, it makes a world of difference. Even if the food is standard, but I feel at home, I will go back," she said.

When authors were asked to list their favourite cafes, these were mentioned: The Clueless Goat in Thomson Road, The Daily Press in Toa Payoh, Jewel Cafe and Bar in Rangoon Road, Necessary Provisions in Bukit Timah, Chye Seng Huat Hardware Coffee Bar in Tyrwhitt Road and Tolido's Espresso Nook in Crawford Lane.

Old-school kopitiam Heap Seng Leong Coffeeshop in North Bridge Road stands out among the list of cafes in the guide, having not been renovated since it opened in the 1970s.

"It's a slice of old Singapore that's hard to find these days," said Ms Lee. "I decided to include old-school coffee shops as they are the original cafes here."

Whether it is the atmosphere, coffee or service, Ms Rachael Boon, 28, a business desk reporter, said "each cafe has its own unique selling point and the book has something for everyone".

For Mr Yeo Sam Jo, 28, a housing reporter, the mass of online reviews can get confusing and "the guide is a good one to have as a one-stop source".

• **Cafe SG: A Cafe Lover's Guide To Singapore is available at \$16 from major bookstores and online at [www.stpressbooks.com.sg](http://www.stpressbooks.com.sg).**