

Local brand to launch more pea-based products

HERBYVORE

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After flying under the radar for 31 years, home-grown agricultural commodity trading and processing company Agrocorp is set to make waves with its plant-based brand HerbYvore, which was launched last month.

Its first product is a pea paneer (\$7.20), which is stocked at FairPrice Finest outlets, Everyday Vegan Grocer and online platform Nourish.

Using peas sourced from farms in Canada, the paneer is manufactured in Singapore. The dairy-free cottage cheese was developed as part of an ongoing research collaboration with the Singapore Institute of Technology.

Fine-dining Indian restaurant Rang Mahal showcases the vegan-friendly pea paneer in a la carte dishes, as well as its HerbYvore Thali menu (\$58++), which includes lentil soup with pea paneer foam and lentil sprouts; pea palak paneer; and pea paneer kulcha (flatbread).

Over the next 12 months, the HerbYvore range will expand with more pea-based products – such as Peata Cheese Cubes, peppered pea cheese, plant-based eggs, pea paneer samosa as well as dark chocolate ice cream and blue pea coconut ice cream, which are made with chick pea flour.

Other made-in-Singapore vegan cheese substitutes available here include Nut Culture's garlic and herb cheese and 4My's camembert – both made with cashews.

HerbYvore's director, Mr Vishal Vijay, 32, is looking to use lentils and mung beans for other products.

He also plans to take HerbY-

vore into other markets such as India, Canada, Australia and the United States, where there is strong demand for vegan food. The pea paneer is also available in Malaysia.

Non-Indian restaurants have been “less receptive” to the pea paneer, he admits, as the name makes it more suited to Indian cooking.

He is hoping to have it featured in cuisines such as Italian, Chinese and Mexican, and is also working with healthcare service providers to use the products as a soya substitute that provides more protein.

On Agrocorp's foray into the plant-based scene, Mr Vishal says: “We are naturally in the plant-based space since pulses are the core raw materials used in plant-based food.

“A few years ago, we saw a role for us in the global movement to shift diets, which came about when people became more conscientious about sustainability, and health and nutrition.”

Indeed, he and his 29-year-old brother – engineering graduates from Cornell University in the US – have been instrumental in paving Agrocorp's path into the plant-based food sector.

Mr Vishal also launched a ventures fund last year, with five investments made so far, including the upcoming vegetable farm LivFresh farm in Lim Chu Kang.

There are plans for HerbYvore to also produce alternative meats, but Mr Vishal notes it is a more crowded space compared with the dairy and egg-substitutes sector.

He adds: “We have to be at the forefront of the latest food trends to remain relevant.”

Eunice Quek