

Raising the steaks for food lovers

Culina goes the extra mile to ensure its meat and other products are safe for consumption

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EPICUREANS will be familiar with Culina — a retailer and wholesale distributor of fine foods such as premium cuts of meats, sustainably farmed fish and seafood, as well as Old and New World wines.

The company, founded in 1994, runs 15 outlets across Singapore, including its flagship store at Dempsey Road, which also boasts a bistro and gourmet boutique.

Its butchery counters stock air-flown grass-fed, grain-fed and organic beef and other meats from countries such as Australia, New Zealand and United States. Hot pre-cooked meats and cold delicatessen products are also popular with customers.

Since 2012, Culina has been part of the COMO Group, a Singapore-based organisation that comprises international luxury fashion retailer Club 21 and wellness brand COMO Shambhala.

Recently, Culina was awarded a Certificate of Commendation under the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA)'s Food Safety Excellence Scheme, introduced to recognise food factories that have consistently maintained high standards of food safety.

Culina received an A grade in 2013 and 2014, under AVA's Food Factory Grading Scheme, for its warehouse and meat plant in Senoko.

Ms Leelyne Yeo, general manager, Culina, says receiving the Certificate of Commendation from AVA is a form of recognition of Culina's high standard of food safety compliance, and it encourages the company and its staff.

"To our existing and potential customers, it provides the assurance that Culina is a reliable and

committed partner who believes in the safety and quality food supplied, and in conforming to the regulatory requirements for food safety," she adds.

All licensed food establishments here are subject to regular inspections by AVA to ensure that the food produced is safe and fit for human consumption. Food produced in these establishments is also subject to laboratory analysis to check for compliance with local food regulations.

Beefing up food safety

Culina works only with suppliers who share its meticulous approach to taste and quality, going to great lengths to ensure its products are prepared and handled under stringent food-safe and hygienic conditions.



From left: Culina's warehouse and meat plant in Senoko.

In 2007, Culina obtained its first Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) certificate for its warehouse in Senoko.

In 2010, it invested in a 19,257 sq ft HACCP-certified meat plant to specialise in hand-portioned meat products and obtained its second



Culina runs 15 outlets across Singapore, including its flagship store at Dempsey Road. PHOTOS: CULINA



HACCP certificate.

The HACCP system scientifically and systematically identifies specific hazards and measures for their control to ensure the safety of food.

The system is adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an international commission cover-

ing food standards, guidelines and codes of practice of the international food trade.

Says Ms Yeo: "The investment in the meat plant and the certification have not only enhanced our brand equity in the hotels, restaurants and cafés, as well as consumer mar-

kets, but also created new ventures and inroads for new business opportunities."

To ensure strict food safety compliance, Culina is regularly audited by both internal and external parties. In maintaining HACCP certification standards, the company set up its own in-house Food Safety department in 2013 to ensure compliance on a day-to-day operational basis.

One of the key objectives of the department is to raise the food safety bar and supply chain management towards higher-level certifications. Culina also invested in an Enterprise Resource Planning system in its warehouse to enhance full traceability.

There is also constant upgrading of current equipment and improvement to its staff's knowledge and skill sets through regular staff training such as HACCP Refresher programmes.

This helps to ensure that all pro-

duction staff carrying out activities related to food safety have the necessary competencies; personnel responsible for monitoring, corrective actions of the HACCP Systems are trained; and staff are aware of the relevance and importance of their activities in contributing to food safety.

"From farm to table, we adopt a holistic approach to quality assurance. Our logistic infrastructure is well-established to meet these needs," says Ms Yeo.

Culina owns and operates a fleet of 14 temperature-controlled delivery trucks.

It has stringent internal procedures and criteria in place to help it select the best suppliers and supply chain vendors, which in turn enables the company to deliver its quality promise to customers.

The company aims to obtain its ISO 22000 certification by the end of 2017.