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# Heidi Spurrell from Food Made Good HK is leading the charge towards a more sustainable F&B industry

by Kopal Manglik (https://thehoneycombers.com/hong-kong/author/kopalmanglik/) | Jan 26, 2022

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Heidi Spurrell hosting the 2021 Food Made Good Awards in Hong Kong.

## A more sustainable restaurant industry is more likely than you'd think. Heidi Spurrell is here to show us how.

If you've enjoyed a meal at one of Hong Kong's many restaurants (https://thehoneycombers.com/hong-kong/new-restaurants-in-hong-kong-2022/)—from yum cha (https://thehoneycombers.com/hong-kong/yum-cha-in-hong-kong/) to fine dining (https://thehoneycombers.com/hong-kong/fine-dining-restaurants-in-hong-kong/)—then you've likely experienced the input of Heidi Spurrell, CEO and founder of Food Made Good HK. As Hong Kong's go-to sustainability consultancy in the Food & Beverage sector, Food Made Good partners with restaurants to provide insight and education on how F&B businesses can be more sustainable. We chatted with Heidi about her journey and what excites her for the future

### Heidi Spurrell, CEO of Food Made Good HK

#### Tell us about the story behind Food Made Good HK?

Food Made Good was founded in the UK over 10 years ago under the Sustainable Restaurant Association. Its mission is to help foodservice businesses operate more sustainably. In late 2019, they began expanding internationally, opening offices in Hong Kong, Japan, and Greece as well as setting up smaller affiliates.

Around this time, I had just completed my Masters in Food Policy and a Diploma in Research Methods in the UK. I was also relocating to Hong Kong with my family so everything just aligned for me to begin here.

Our growth over the last two years has been extraordinary and we now work with more than 70 members with over 300 outlets across Hong Kong. Given that roughly 25% of all greenhouse gases are emitted by the food system, this is a small—but important—step in the right direction. We're highly motivated and ambitious; we plan to double our membership in the next two years.

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### What are some common misconceptions about sustainability and the restaurant industry?

I think the biggest is the cost required to operate more sustainably. Most individuals and restaurants believe it's very expensive to become greener. However, we've collected ample data that proves that you needn't lose money by doing things sustainably. For example, one of our restaurants stopped buying bottled water and instead installed a high-quality water filtration system that provides delicious still and sparkling water. This saves not only the cost of importing bottled water, but also storage space and all the time and effort spent on reordering. And of course, there are all the benefits from eliminating single-use bottles. The return on investment has been incredible. It took the restaurant just one month to recover the initial outlay!

This is just one of many case studies showing that being sustainable needn't be costly, and can even be profitable in the long run. It's truly about educating our clients and members and shifting mindsets. Taking time to fully evaluate your operations, from sourcing ingredients to waste management, will show how even small changes can make a big impact.

I recommend getting an external perspective, specifically from a third-party consultant like ourselves. This makes it easier to identify the changes you need to make. There are so many aspects to sustainability that it initially can be overwhelming. You just need a moment to stop and think. To slow down from business as usual in hectic Hong Kong.

### If you had to highlight one project which would it be?



Our partnership with Pernod Ricard has been one of the most interesting. Here, we designed a face-to-face course to train bartenders in Hong Kong; then, on the back of that, we have created a Train the Trainer Programme that we currently are supporting across APAC and will help the drinks industry make big strides towards become more sustainable. The programme's reach and scalability are especially exciting, as the aim is to train 10,000 bartenders by 2030. The idea was started in the UK. Applying it to the Asia region is helping make sustainability here more than a trend, and more a way of doing business.

Another exciting project is the relaunch of One Planet Plate, which will hopefully kick off right after Chinese New Year. It was first launched in the UK in 2018, and then relaunched in Hong Kong in 2020, but we are now expanding it into a global programme. We invite chefs from around the world to showcase recipes for dishes that contribute to a better food future—and hopefully inspire both diners and home cooks to consider their own choices. So keep your eyes peeled for more updates on this!

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### We'd also love an inside scoop! What's your favorite place to eat in Hong Kong?

At any of our members (<https://foodmadegood.hk/founder-members/>), of course! There are so many great places to eat here. I love that we work with restaurants in every price range, serving every style of cuisine, so you can choose what matches your mood.

It's not always about going to a fancy Michelin-star restaurant. You can also stop by your local cha chaan teng. And so many local restaurants are working hard to be more sustainable, as well as serving incredible food.

I also love visiting social enterprises such as Café 8, which created a unique vocational training programme that employs people with learning disabilities. They have a beautiful location at the pier and, of course, great food. Whether you're looking for a quick drink, a full meal, or to specifically support their mission, it's always worth a visit. I also really love ingredient-led restaurants. Recently, I find myself returning to Uma Nota, Roganic, and, of course, Moxie for its great lunch deals.

### What's an easy, green recipe you like making at home?

I used to cook a lot but, since moving to Hong Kong, that's reduced. I do love a hearty quinoa salad made with high-quality olive oil, garlic, greens and parmesan. And, of course, you can add many other ingredients, especially leftovers. It's also super quick as you just need to chop everything up. It's easy to make great salads that are healthy, tasty and filling—especially if you use grains. As it's getting colder, I'm making more soup. I love white bean and leek soup, or anything with barley.

### Finally, what's next for you and Food Made Good HK?

Heidi (middle) at the 2021 Food Made Good Awards, with Jessica Chong (left), Head – Strategic Marketing, Henderson Land Group, Lead Sponsor, and Alex Wassermann (right), Head of Hotels & Service Apartments, Miramar Group.

Well, we just got our certified B Corp status, which took a long time; we are super proud to be recognised as a purpose-driven organisation. We will be promoting and sharing how we put purpose over profit and how they don't have to be mutually exclusive.

As mentioned, we're aiming to double our membership in the next two years. Our fantastic president, Richard Ekkebus (<https://thehoneycombers.com/hong-kong/best-chefs-hong-kong/>)—who's Director of Culinary Operations and F&B at The Landmark Mandarin Oriental—is driving this forward with the goal of normalising sustainability across the entire sector.

The only way to make our low cost membership work is through having other income streams. So we also hope to grow our consultancy business, which helps support our work for members. I always say it's like our own Robin Hood situation, as the membership is excellent value for money. Conducting sustainability audits for restaurants is one way so we can make both meaningful and measurable changes, as well as generate income, but we also seek sponsorship for our food sustainability events.

We're truly thankful for the many organisations that sponsor our events. For example, the annual Food Made Good awards last year was made possible by lead sponsor Henderson Land Group. We also had many other great supporters such as DIT and InvestHK.

We also plan to grow our team, although we don't want to expand too quickly because working with like-minded individuals is always the priority. For us, it's never about just going after clients or projects that pay, but rather finding partners who align with our vision and mission. So if you know anyone who seems like a good fit, please drop us a line!

**Kopal Manglik**

Kopal is a copywriter who works with companies to help them find their brand voice. When not working, she loves exploring Hong Kong, meeting interesting people and of course, writing about it. She is also passionate about sustainability, animal welfare, mental health, and is always on the lookout for the best cafes, shops, events in Hong Kong. You can find out more about her at [www.kopalmanglik.com](https://www.kopalmanglik.com), or on Instagram at @andshedoes.

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