

# Hey, Sugar

Daniel Ong and Jaime Teo are the proud new owners of **TWELVE CUPCAKES**, a casual-chic bakery/cafe that hawks sweet treats baked by themselves.

**WHAT:** "We've got a problem," Daniel Ong tells us over the phone minutes before we arrive at Twelve Cupcakes. Turns out Dan and Jaime Teo are running low on cupcakes at their bakery for our photoshoot — and this is before noon, mind you. The husband-and-wife team has sold about 5,000 cupcakes since their shop opened a fortnight ago. Why the name Twelve Cupcakes? "Twelve is the perfect number. I used to be a bowler and 12 strikes make a perfect game," says Dan.



(from left)  
Rainbow Vanilla,  
Strawberry Choco,  
Red Velvet

"There are also 12 holes in the baking tray, 12 months in a year, 12 numbers on the clock and 12 zodiac signs."

**THE LOOK:** It's hard to miss Twelve Cupcakes, even in the maze that is the United Square basement. The dainty pink signpost, white-washed brick walls and a sleek cupcake display counter, all designed by Dan, remind us of a breezy Aussie café. You can eat your cupcakes instore — there're a dozen seats or so and tea/coffee on the menu — if you don't mind the constant flow of office workers, students and screaming tykes on their way to tuition centres upstairs.

**THE FOOD:** The cupcakes (\$3 for one; \$33 for 12) are baked by Dan and Jaime themselves — for now. Until they find bakers who can "bake cupcakes the way Jaime does", this couple will be slaving away at the oven. The main stars of Twelve Cupcakes are not the celeb couple but the moist and crumbly cupcakes. They're smaller than their average *angmoh* counterparts — not that our waistlines are complaining. There are up to two daily specials among the 12 flavours available. When we visit, **Blueberry** cupcakes are the day's special, though it really should be a mainstay on the menu. The wonderful vanilla cupcake topped with a light cream cheese frosting and juicy blueberries is very satisfying. Or go for an American fave — the sinful **Peanut Butter Chocolate**, gooey peanut butter and chocolate fudge lattice on a moist chocolate cupcake. There are also alcoholic offerings, like the **Baileys Chocolate**, vanilla cake with a dollop of okay-tasting buttercream infused with Baileys Irish cream.

**VERDICT:** ★★★★★ The cupcakes are quite tiny for its price, but it's a delightful bakery with gratifying, elegant-looking treats.

## A Quick Q&A

**8 DAYS:** Both of you look like bona fide bakers, with flour on your aprons and all.

**DANIEL:** That's 'cos we've been here baking since 8am! We wake up at 6am daily to spend time with our 15-month-old daughter, Renee. We get to the shop by 8am and bake three batches throughout the day. Jaime tries to go back by 7pm to be with the baby. I'll stay until 9.30pm to clean up before going home to do the accounts. By the time we get to bed, it's midnight.

**JAIME:** I want to tuck Renee in bed every night. Sometimes I miss her so much while I'm here, I'll start crying.

**D:** But it's paying off. On our second day, we received a franchise offer. There was this dude sitting outside all day who raised the issue. We declined because we're just hoping to get the name of Twelve Cupcakes out for now. Things have been good and we're already on the lookout for other locations. You need to strike while the iron's hot.

**Why did you decide to set up a cupcake shop?**

**D:** We wanted something that would combine both our passions. Jaime's is baking, mine is business. We put in about \$100,000 to set up Twelve Cupcakes.

**J:** I watched shows like *DC Cupcakes* and realised I wanted a shop just like that. To me, this was a "let's give it a shot, maybe we'll make a million dollars" sorta thing. I knew it'd be hard work, but never thought it'd be this crazy. We're looking to employ managers and bakers 'cos it's hard for us to sustain this lifestyle. I admit I never used to work so hard. (Laughs)



**How do you juggle this with your hosting jobs?**

**D:** Hosting is still our main job — we try to juggle everything. I'll do voiceovers at our recording studio at home, Jaime sends out invoices. We've decided to go another route and not dabble in the property market anymore 'cos of the new rules that have been put in place.

**Dan, did you learn to bake specially for the business?**

**J:** He was never interested in baking until it became a business idea — then he learned it in less than a week. I've been baking at home for five years, so I tell him what mistakes I've made so he can avoid them.

**D:** She's a good teacher. Believe it or not, I'm the one baking all the cakes now. Jaime does the icing and comes up with new flavours.

**Are these your own recipes?**

**J:** There are many recipes online and most of them are too sweet. So we modify them to make them perfect before we sell them. Having a good recipe is the first step to success. ☑

Twelve Cupcakes is at #B1-60 United Square, 101 Thomson Rd. Tel: 6256-8130. Visit [www.twelvecupcakes.com](http://www.twelvecupcakes.com)