



Van Leeuwen Ice Cream at Orchard Central

Description

How I got to know about Van Leeuwen from the YouTube channel CNBC Make It. It is a channel about how businesses grew to where they are today. The story begins with co-founder Ben Van Leeuwen selling ice cream from a single ice cream truck about 15 months ago to it becoming a household US ice cream brand. What differentiates Van Leeuwen ice cream from other ice cream options in the market is that their ice cream is made with more than double the amount of egg yolks as standard ice cream. While the ice cream on their website states that the ice cream is “French style[d]”, they are truly an American brand.

Just about a month ago, Van Leeuwen opened its first store in Singapore. Its location is on the ground level of Orchard Central.



We went there on a weekday afternoon. There was no queue and about half the available seating was taken.





These are the flavours on offer. To be honest, the display was a little underwhelming considering how welcoming the storefront was. The person over the counter did not offer any recommendations.





For me, I ordered a housemade waffle cone with 2 scoops of vegan ice cream. I chose the Strawberry Shortcake and the PB Brownie Honeycomb. Our creative director, Wilber settled on the Peanut Butter Cake with a normal cone.



Mine looked appetising but it was anything but. The vegan options do not offer any flavour other than just being overly sweet. The idea of having all these variations in ice cream would be to add layers of depth and flavour but this was just plain sweet. I could barely taste any brownies and the peanut butter taste was very muted. Trust me, I am into low-fat, vegan options and there are items I could get from the freezer of Cold Storage that would have beaten what I ordered at Van Leeuwen. As for the housemade waffle cone, it was soft and slightly mushy. It was not freshly made and felt like it had been left out in the open for some time.



Wilber also commented that his ice cream was too sweet. I took a scoop of his ice cream and it was better than the vegan option. It felt extremely rich but I had the same complaint about its sweetness.

Cold Stone Creamery used to also be on the first level of Orchard Central. While it survived in

Singapore for a significant period of time before leaving the Singapore market, it offered the novelty of having its servers mix up your ice cream before your eyes. Toppings will be frantically chopped up and mixed into your ice cream and that topping adds depth and texture to otherwise plain frozen milk. This is what I would expect when I ordered something like Peanut Butter Brownie Honeycomb. Come to think of it... where was the honeycomb?



I do want international brands to succeed within Singapore. However, the Singapore customer is a fussy one. He has tried many competing brands and can tell when something is distinctly different. He is also looking for an experience. Most importantly, when an international brand comes to town, it must adapt to suit the local palate. Singaporeans, in general, do not like things too sweet. When something that is loaded with sugar comes to town, this goes against the grain of our tastebuds. Plastered across the wall on our side of the store was this phrase “a life without anything good is bad”. Dear Van Leeuwan, this also applies to ice cream...

Perhaps Van Leeuwan will slowly improve its offering to cater to the local palate. I do hope it does. I really liked their story when I watched them on the YouTube channel, CNBC Make It.

Yours sincerely,

Daryl

Van Leeuwen Ice Cream
Orchard Central, 181 Orchard Rd, #01-19, Singapore 238896

Opening Hours:
Sunday to Wednesday: 12 pm to 11 pm
Thursday to Saturday: 12 pm to 12 am

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