



September 2021

Raising the Bar 環保酒吧

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Recommended Citation

Lung, Tama Miyake (2021) "Raising the Bar 環保酒吧," *AMBROSIA 客道 : The Magazine of The International Culinary Institute* , 52-57.

Available at: <https://repository.vtc.edu.hk/ive-hosts-ambrosia/vol10/iss1/18>

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Sustainability has been a buzzword among restaurants for some time now, but what about bars? Turns out there are a growing number of outlets, in Hong Kong and elsewhere, that are committed to changing the world through eco-conscious practices such as zero waste and closed-loop production. 可持續發展的潮流近年已席捲世界各地餐廳，酒吧業卻看似不為所動？然而實情並非如此，香港以至各大城市均有越來越多酒吧積極推動零廢棄和閉環式生產等環保措施，致力改變這世界。

By Tama Miyake Lung



*A fermented cocktail
sits on a table made
from salvaged wood at
Penicillin*

Penicillin用搶救回來的木材
做的餐桌及以發酵食材
調配的雞尾酒

Raising the bar

環保酒吧

It's a hot and humid summer evening when we arrive at Penicillin, a newly opened cocktail bar in the space formerly occupied by Buddha Lounge. The dimly lit basement, tucked under the escalator just off Hollywood Road, has everything we'd expect of the city's hippest new nightlife destination: rustic wooden stools and tables, a sleek bar backed by row upon row of bottles, and bespoke neon wall lights casting a soft glow on the urban millennial crowd. That is, until we learn the stools and tables are made from trees that fell during Super Typhoon Mangkhut, the bottles are empty vessels held in place by laboratory clamps and the neon lights have been salvaged from old Hong Kong signboards.

The brainchild of industry veterans Agung Prabowo and Roman Ghale, Penicillin is the city's first sustainable bar that champions a closed-loop model of production. Everything from the decor to the drinks, food and even hand sanitiser in the toilet is designed to minimise waste, conserve natural resources, reduce carbon impact and support local producers. Much like the sustainable restaurants that have been gaining traction in recent years, sustainable bars look to be the next big thing for the F&B industry and, their founders hope, the future of our planet.

"We've done so many bars in the past," says Prabowo, who with Ghale is best known for award-winning Hong Kong bar The Old Man. "So we thought, why don't we create something that Hong Kong doesn't have? We also realised with the pandemic that people's lifestyles are changing – the way they drink, the way they eat. So why don't we just [focus on] sustainability?"

Prabowo and Ghale, together with their wives Laura and Katy, took advantage of the economic downturn brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic to take over the Buddha Lounge space and reconfigure it for sustainable practices like self-brewing, fermenting and upcycling ingredients. Penicillin opened its doors in November 2020, right before Hong Kong was hit by the fourth wave.

"Our main focus is the closed-loop cycle, meaning we use all the ingredients to the fullest," Prabowo says. "We're not saying we don't create any waste but we are minimising the waste. We recycle and upcycle at the same time. That's why we have four elements here in our bar – laboratory, main bar, kitchen and fermentation room. Whatever we think we can recycle, we send it to the kitchen or the fermentation room or the lab to make the next ingredient for our cocktails or our food."

我們光顧新開張的雞尾酒吧Penicillin那個夏日夜晚，天氣炎熱又潮濕。Penicillin位於Buddha Lounge舊址，就在荷李活道行人電梯附近的地下室，燈光有點昏暗，裝修跟本城其他時髦的夜生活場所並無二致：質樸的木凳和木桌、時尚的吧台後面排著一列列空瓶、牆上量身設計的霓虹燈在年輕的都市人群身上灑下柔和的光。不過，當我們知道做桌凳的木材來自被颱風山竹吹倒的樹木、空瓶是由實驗室用的金屬夾固定在牆上、而霓虹燈則來自本港被棄置的招牌之後，一切都改觀了。

由業內老手Agung Prabowo和Roman Ghale合辦的Penicillin是本城第一間「閉環式生產可持續發展」酒吧，意味著由裝潢到飲品、食物以至廁所裡的洗手液等一切，都是以盡量減少廢棄、保護大自然資源、減少碳排放和支持本地生產商為依歸。老闆們期望，為了地球的未來，可持續發展酒吧會像近年來備受注目的可持續發展餐廳一樣，成為餐飲業界的下一股重要潮流。

跟Ghale一起開辦香港酒吧The Old Man並贏得多項殊榮的Prabowo講述：「我們打造過許多酒吧，因此我們想，何不開一家香港前所未見的？我們留意到疫情改變了大家的生活方式——品酒和用膳的習慣都有所改變，於是想到開一家（強調）可持續發展的酒吧。」

Prabowo和Ghale加上兩人的太太Laura和Katy趁著經濟備受新冠疫情打擊的時機租下Buddha Lounge的舊址，改裝成可持續發展酒吧，由釀製啤

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When it comes to sourcing ingredients from outside, the Penicillin team is equally mindful of their place of origin and environmental impact. They work with local farmers, fishermen and distilleries, and buy gin, vodka and other spirits in bulk from closed-loop distributor EcoSpirits. The most challenging aspect of working with the closed-loop model, according to the founders, is maintaining discipline.

“Every single person has to be dedicated to what we’re doing,” Prabowo says. “And sometimes when you’re in F&B, especially in a bar, you get tired and completely forget about what you’re doing.”

“When you’re making a drink, it’s quite difficult as well,” Prabowo’s wife Laura adds. “When we worked in other places, we could get whatever we wanted from anywhere. But now we have to work only with local sources. If we want to make a drink with seven layers of taste, we have to make it from very limited ingredients or from leftovers.”

We would like what we're doing here to be an example for others to see they can also do something

我們希望能以身作則，讓其他人知道自己也可以有所作為

– Laura Prabowo

Regardless of the challenges, the Penicillin founders are clearly passionate about what they call “Hong Kong heritage sustainability” and its potential to influence others in a positive way. “We would like what we’re doing here to be an example for others to see they can also do something,” Laura says. “If it’s only us, maybe it’s hard [to make a difference], but if we come together maybe we can help the world a little bit.”



That same philosophy drives others in equally busy urban centres like New York, where The Oberon Group has opened the first zero-waste wine bar of its kind in the US. “It’s kind of unbelievable to most that you can run a zero-waste space in the middle of a hyper-industrialised city, but once we have a chance to engage with customers and show a bit of what we’re doing, there’s a great deal of enthusiasm about our approach,” says deputy director Halley Chambers of Rhodora, which uses only products that can be recycled, upcycled or composted to ensure nothing is sent to landfill.

Chambers, whose other sustainable projects include Italian restaurant Rucola, natural wine bar June and catering service Purslane, is guided by an unwavering respect for humans and the environment. “Climate change is the most critical issue of our time, and one that has local and global consequences,” she says. “Fighting

酒到食材發酵與升級再造均一手包辦。Penicillin於2020年11月開業，不久，香港就受到第四波新冠肺炎疫情的衝擊。

Prabowo指：「酒吧主張閉環式生產，意味著我們必須物盡其用。這不是說酒吧不會產生任何廢棄物，但我們會盡可能減少製造垃圾。我們不僅會將物品循環再造，也會升級再造，因此酒吧設有四大區域：實驗室、吧枱、廚房和發酵室。任何我們認為可以循環再造的東西都會拿到廚房、發酵室或實驗室，看看是否可以用來炮製雞尾酒或烹調美食。」

至於從外面購買食材時，酒吧員工會特別注重其來源地及對環境的影響。他們會跟本地農夫、漁夫和蒸餾廠緊密聯繫，每次均會向閉環式分銷商

EcoSpirits大量購入氈酒、伏特加等烈酒。據老闆們所說，閉環式經營最困難的地方是保持自律。

Prabowo解釋：「所有人工作時一刻都不能馬虎，但餐飲業尤其是酒吧的工作有時會讓人累到完全忘記自己在幹什麼。」

Prabowo太太Laura補充：「調配飲品時也變得綁手綁腳。在其他地方工作，想要哪裡來的任何食材都可以，但現在我們只有本地食材可挑。如果想調配一種有七層味道的飲品，我們只能善用種類不多的食材或剩餘材料。」

儘管困難重重，Penicillin的老闆們卻懷抱著滿腔熱忱，孜孜宣揚他們口中的「香港文化的可持續發展」，

並希望能為他人樹立榜樣。Laura說：「我們希望能以身作則，讓其他人知道自己也可以有所作為。只有我們或許會獨力難支，但大家共同努力也許就可以讓世界變好一點。」

其他繁忙的大都會也同樣有人積極擁抱這信念，The Oberon集團在紐約開了美國首家零廢棄葡萄酒吧Rhodora。酒吧副總監Halley Chambers表示：「在超級工業化的城市裡經營一家零廢棄酒吧，確實有點難以置信，但一旦有機會接觸客人，讓他們看到我們的努力，就會得到非常熱烈的回應。」Rhodora只採用可以循環再造、升級再造或用作堆肥的產品，確保不會製造任何垃圾。

Chambers對保護人類和地球環境不遺餘力，除了



This page: Penicillin founders Agung Prabowo, Laura Prabowo, Katy Ghale and Roman Ghale, with designer Betty Ng at centre

Opposite page, from top: Penicillin's design team Collective sourcing fallen trees with HK Timberbank, the food at zero-waste wine bar Rhodora

本頁：Penicillin老闆Agung Prabowo、Laura Prabowo、Katy Ghale和Roman Ghale，中間為設計師Betty Ng

對頁上至下：Penicillin聘用的設計公司Collective向「香港木庫」購入由樹木切割下來的木材；零廢棄酒吧Rhodora供應的美食

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climate change is a chance for all of us to unite to save our most crucial resource – the planet.”

In order to do so, every aspect of Rhodora has been designed to tread lightly on the Earth. All trash bins have been removed, no single-use plastics are allowed into the space, wines are sourced from small natural producers and shelf-stable foods are offered in carefully portioned servings. Its food and beverage suppliers are even working to reduce packaging waste and create closed-loop delivery systems.

While Chambers sees Rhodora as part of a global movement towards a green economy, other sustainable bar owners are focusing their attention and efforts on their local community. Cocktail bar and craft distillery Himkok, winner of The World’s 50 Best Bars inaugural Ketel One Sustainable Bar Award in 2018, was created to “embody Norwegian culture”. By using local ingredients to make its own beer, wine and spirits, the bar is able to support its neighbours while promoting sustainability at the same time.

Likewise, in Malaysia, Bar Trigona at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur – winner of Asia’s 50 Best Bars Ketel One Sustainable Bar Award in 2019 and 2020 – is committed to using local ingredients and providing a platform for local farmers. “The foundation of Trigona is built on sustainability and helping the local community,” says head bartender Ashish Sharma. “Malaysia has so much to offer and that’s what we want to show to the world through our beverage programme.”

Take the bar’s signature drink: the Trigona Old Fashioned made with rye whiskey, cynar (an Italian bitter apéritif), cedar wood bitters and trigona honey, the latter of which is produced by the stingless honeybee from which the bar takes its name. Under the Save the Bees scheme, guests who order the drink can adopt a hive and receive six jars of trigona honey with all proceeds helping farmers to build more hives and improve their cultivation.

“The idea was to create an institution where you educate and create awareness about local indigenous ingredients and support the local farmers,” says Sharma, whose other sustainability efforts include the five Rs (Reuse, Recycle, Reduce, Refuse and Repurpose) and the Tree-Volution project that supports the transformation and renewal of Malaysian forests.

While Bar Trigona is one of a small number of Malaysian bars and restaurants implementing sustainable practices, Sharma has seen interest growing slowly but steadily among customers and the industry at large. “Working in F&B, we are considered a front line in reducing food waste and educating people about the importance of sustainability,” he says. “It will take time, of course, but we will see the change sooner rather than later.”

It’s a sentiment shared by Ghale of Penicillin, which succeeded Bar Trigona as winner of Asia’s 50 Best Bars Ketel One Sustainable Bar Award in 2021. “We are what we are,” he says. “We are a few people who want to do something different, to contribute, to make the world move in the right direction. Maybe our efforts are really small but in the future they will create a big change.” 🍷



Working in F&B, we are considered a front line in reducing food waste and educating people about the importance of sustainability

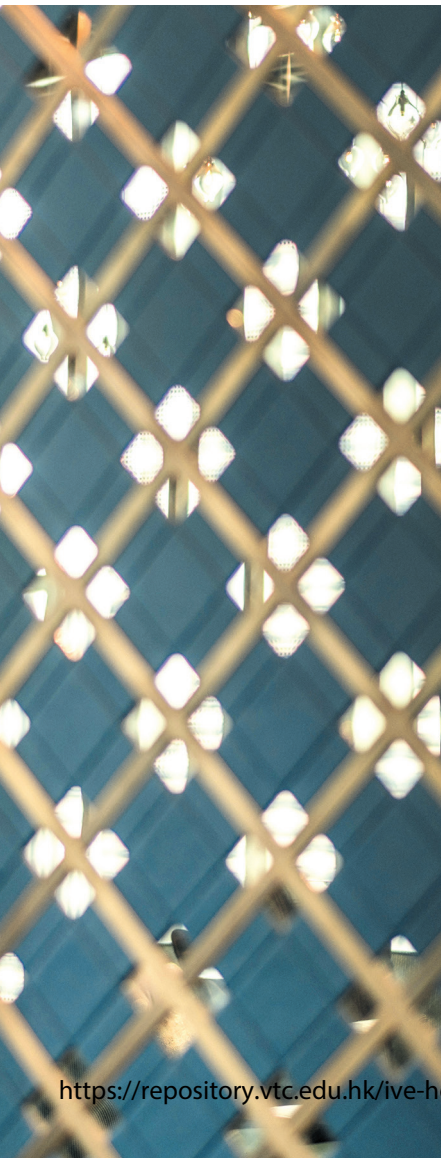
我們任職餐飲業的人可說是站在減少食物浪費的前線，有責任讓大家認識可持續發展的重要性



– Ashish Sharma

BELOW AND NEAR RIGHT: COURTESY OF FOURSEASONS HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR. FARRIGHT: COURTESY OF WORLD'S 50 BEST BARS





Clockwise from left: Ashish Sharma at Bar Trigona; the signature Trigona Old Fashioned with local honey; Himkok's bar manager Odd Strandbakken

左圖起順時針：Bar Trigona調酒師Ashish Sharma；以本地蜜糖調配的招牌雞尾酒Trigona Old Fashioned；Himkok酒吧經理Odd Strandbakken

Rhodora，名下還有意大利餐廳Rucola、天然葡萄酒吧June和提供到會服務的Purslane等多家可持續發展的餐飲食肆。她說：「氣候變化是當今最嚴峻的問題，本地以至全球均會受到影響。地球是我們最重要的資源，對抗氣候變化就是我們團結起來保護它的一次機會。」

為了實現可持續發展，Rhodora的每個環節都以減少對地球的影響為依歸，包括移走所有垃圾桶、棄用所有用完即棄的塑膠用品、向小型的天然釀酒商買酒，以及供應分量適中的耐存食物等。所有食物和飲品供應商也同心協力，一起減少包裝廢料，務求連運送過程都達到閉環式生產的要求。

Chambers視Rhodora為全球環保運動的參與者，其他酒吧老闆則將注意力放在本地社區。雞尾酒吧兼手工蒸餾廠Himkok於2018年獲得首屆全球50最佳酒吧之Ketel One可持續發展酒吧獎，標榜「體現挪威文化」。酒吧不僅採用本地食材自釀啤酒、葡萄酒和烈酒，還同時推廣可持續發展和支援本地社區經濟。

在馬來西亞，位於吉隆坡四季酒店的Bar Trigona，於2019及2020年連續兩屆獲得亞洲50最佳酒吧之Ketel One可持續發展酒吧獎。Trigona同樣致力採用本地食材及支援本地農夫，首席調酒師Ashish Sharma表示：「推廣可持續發展和支援本地社區經濟是Trigona的兩大基石，我們希望藉著酒吧的飲品向世界展示馬來西亞可以做到很多。」

以酒吧的招牌飲品Trigona Old Fashioned為例，材料除了有黑麥威士忌、意大利開胃苦酒cynar、雪松木苦酒外，還有由當地的無針銀蜂所釀造的蜜糖；酒吧的名字Trigona就是銀蜂的意思。在酒吧的保護銀蜂計劃下，客人凡點一杯Trigona Old Fashioned便可領養一個銀蜂巢，每年獲得六瓶銀蜂蜜，而所有收益會用來協助農夫建造更多蜂巢及改善銀蜂的養殖環境。

Sharma表示：「我們的構思是設立一個宣傳本地原生食材和支持本地農夫的組織，提高大家在這方面的認知。」他還貫徹執行五大環保原則（重用、循環再造、減少、回絕和改作其他用途），以及支援改造和復興馬來西亞森林的Tree-volution計劃。

目前馬來西亞只有Trigona等少數酒吧和餐廳推行可持續發展措施，但總的來說，顧客和業內人士已慢慢地越來越重視這事。他說：「我們任職餐飲業的人可說是站在減少食物浪費的前線，有責任讓大家認識可持續發展的重要性。這種工作不能一蹴而就，但卻是越快越好。」

Ghale也深有同感。他開辦的Penicillin擠下Trigona，獲得2021年亞洲50最佳酒吧之Ketel One可持續發展酒吧獎。他說：「我們就是這樣。我們是幾個想身體力行去作出改變、去讓這世界朝著正途前進的人，我們現時的力量或許微小，但將來一定能夠推動巨大的轉變。」🍷