Le Chouette Macaron, founded by Wahdi and his business partner in January 2012, aims to popularise French macaron to the Malaysian market, and play a role in making customers' events a success.

Trendy desserts have come and gone, and here in Malaysia another treat is becoming all the rage and is the current defining sweet offering: Bonjour, macaron! Malaysians' newfound obsession with macarons has led — perhaps inevitably — to the birth of many macaron bakers. And among all the bakers, one stood out with his talent and originality. That baker is the ever so amazing Wahdi Farhad Hadithon.

Today, Wahdi and his partner own a company named Le Chouette Macarons that sells macarons and cakes online. And Le Chouette's macarons and cakes are simply divine — in looks and taste. Although, they were many homemade bakeries selling macarons and cakes online, not many were carefully made using only high-quality ingredients like Le Chouette's macarons.

Today, his macarons and cakes are sought after by customers not only in the Klang Valley but all over Malaysia. In fact, the demand is already so high that there is a waiting list of almost four months.

Wahdi and his business partner are currently busy putting up finishing touches at their soon to be opened Le Chouette Cake Studio in Soho, Empire in Subang Jaya.
Once open, the cake studio will entertain walk-in customers who may purchase not only cakes and macarons but also Le Chouette merchandises like t-shirts. Despite his busy schedule, Wahdi shares with us at Malaysian Business a little bit about himself and his company.

Q: Could you share with us some background of yourself and your business venture?

Wahdi: I am a graphic design graduate from UiTM. My first job was with a landscaping company where I designed outdoor living space for the company’s clients. I then joined two consecutive courseware production companies, specialising in content design work; the first based in Seri Kembangan, the latter in Cyberjaya. In 2009, I attended a summer photography course in Paris, France. That was when I took an interest in the elite French macaron. I made another trip to Paris in 2011 where I attended a macaron baking course. I started practising making macarons as soon as I got back to Malaysia, and through some postings on my blog, received a few orders. From macarons, I then received some cake requests, and have been baking since.

Le Chouette Macaron was officially established in January 2012. Our main objective has been to bring French macaron to the Malaysian market, and play a role in making our customers’ events a success. We aim to bring the business to the next level by making it a recognised choice in macarons and cakes.

Q. What arc the achievements that you and the company have achieve so far? What are the reasons for such achievements?

Wahdi: The company has penetrated quite a diverse market in a short time. Our customer base spans across the three main races, and across all economic divides. Our brand recognition has been phenomenal, considering we are a fairly young company.

Today, our Instagram is followed by almost 22,000 people and its counting. I would attribute this to branding persona – we have managed to build the right...
recommendation. We have a healthy number of repeat customers who were impressed with the unique taste and quality of our products. We also attribute our strong brand presence to the social media. Satisfied customers share pictures and their verdict of our products on social media, and the audience reach has helped spread about our existence.

We also attribute our business growth to e-commerce where ordering and payment is simplified manifold. A majority of our transactions were conducted online, which allows us to tap into the youth market segment. This market segment is important as they always find an occasion to celebrate, and how else to celebrate but with something that can be eaten, and shared online?

Wahdi while in Paris learning the art of making macarons.

By associating the right elements, we have increased the brand value and relevance to the different psychographics. Le Chouette Macaron’s customers range from the regular man-on-the-street, to high profile public figures; some of whom were introduced to us through personal mix of associations, namely food, culture, art and travel, into the Wahdi Farhad Hadithon name. By associating the right elements, we have increased the brand value and relevance to the different psychographics.
Some of the most promising achievements were in the form of recommendations from hotel chefs themselves when they were unable to fulfil their customers’ order. They have been instrumental in directing affluent customers to Le Chouette Macaron.

Q. Are you happy with what you have achieved so far?
Wahdi: Yes, very much so. Le Chouette Macaron’s brand presence has strengthened faster than I expected and customers’ feedback has been more than encouraging.

What usually takes a more gradual introduction and growth stage in a product life-cycle, we have experienced in a short two years. I am very happy with the outcome so far, but there is much more ahead that we have yet to encounter.

Q. What are some of the main challenges that you and your company have had to endure and how do you address those?
Wahdi: Just like any customer-centric businesses, customer satisfaction remains our biggest challenge. For the company, it has to deliver what the brand promises, and what the customers want. Some customers require more care and tact to handle, while the majority have been adventurous enough to say “surprise me!”

The other major challenge is high-quality baking supplies. Sourcing for reliable vendors is a primary concern, and their cash flow do indirectly affect Le Chouette Macaron’s efficiency.

Our operations require a very short stock holding time, therefore we need our vendors to be very reliable and on-time. We leverage on mid-term purchasing commitments to compel our vendors to remain reliable. And by that, I mean paying in cash and in full for every purchase we make.

At a personal level, being the sole artist working on cake aesthetics, I wish I have more hours in a day. Squeezing time out for R&D is a must, and juggling between baking and product development has been a personal challenge.

Q. Moving forward, what is your expectation for the business venture?
Wahdi: The product must grow. So must the business. And their growth must be synchronised for it to bear fruit. My immediate objective is to build the company’s wealth to facilitate the long-term plan of diversifying the business.

A very natural intuition is to open a Le Chouette Macaron café, but we are in no hurry to dive into it because café culture has indeed reached its plateau phase, and new entrants better have the right appeal. We have seen enough casualties to be cautious.

Q. What are, in your opinion, the important traits that an entrepreneur should possess? Why?
Wahdi: An entrepreneur must be a visionary. A self-fulfilling visionary. And for that, he must possess leadership. A visionary entrepreneur plays the role of a soothsayer, able to foresee what is ahead when his competitors can’t. And even when he can’t, he creates the right conditions where he can keep steering his ship ahead.

Honesty is also another good trait, as honesty breeds integrity, transparency and accountability. Sadly, many entrepreneurs had not made transparency and accountability the foundation of their company’s sustainability charter. A business can be doing a lot of good deeds, but if it lacks transparency and accountability, it remains open to misconception by the public.

Another trait is originality. Without originality, a product has to fight a fierce competition. At Le Chouette Macaron, we stay away from copying others. We include in product development R&D to keep our product and designs fresh all the time.