

Singapore

Durian sellers prepare for higher demand as the peak period nears

By Cindy Co

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SINGAPORE: As the durian season gets under way in Singapore, sellers of the pungent fruit are anticipating an uptick in demand, especially during the peak period, which they estimate will begin in about a week or two.

While sales have largely been the same as in previous years for most, sellers told CNA that they are hoping that lower prices during the peak period will draw more customers to their shops.

Mr Louis Lee, a partner at Louis Durian, said that sales this season have been “quite okay”, as the cost of durian is “still quite high”. He attributed the “high” price of durian to Malaysia suppliers looking to export durians to China, where appetite for the fruit has skyrocketed in recent years.

Currently, he sells about 1,500 kg of durians a day, but he hopes to increase this to 2,500 kg during the peak period. His bestselling durian is the Musang King, or Mao Shan Wang, from Pahang.

He sells the Musang King at S\$21 per kg now, but hopes that the price will drop to S\$17 or S\$18 in a week.

Co-owner of Royal Durian Jeremy Chew also found sales this year to be largely unchanged, although he expects figures to go up this season as the company receives more exposure through word-of-mouth.

Durian 26, however, has seen business improve by 20 per cent compared to last year.

“Maybe due to most people (not being able to) go overseas, they just stay in Singapore,” said owner Alvin Teo. He found that the price and quality of durian were better this year as well, which could have attracted more customers. Durian 26 is currently selling the Musang King at S\$22 per kg, with smaller, grade B durians going for between S\$15 and S\$18 per kg.

He said that the price will “definitely” go down to S\$18 to S\$20 per kg for the Musang King, and this will likely pull in more customers.

Managing director of Durian Wholesale Asia Phua Cheng Jing said that the wholesaler has seen similar demand this year compared to last year.

“Demand has always been quite high in Singapore,” he said.

Durian Wholesale Asia currently sells about 3,000 kg of durians a day, and Mr Phua expects this to go up to 4,500 kg in two weeks. They sell their durians to merchants at about S\$17 to S\$18 per kg.

“This year, I think momentum is still going up and up. Because it’s still not the full-on durian craze yet,” he said.

DURIAN SUPPLY

Mr Lee and Mr Chew said that Malaysian suppliers prioritise sales to China, which means that supply is limited.

“There is always a supply issue ever since China has opened up to durian,” said Mr Chew, adding that the price of the Musang King has not dropped since then.

“Whoever that is selling to Singapore, basically they do not have the opportunity to export to China.”

However, he noted that Singapore’s market share was too small for the price of durians to be significantly affected.

He disagreed with other sellers’ claims that the price of durian would fall during a peak period. He said that the price of durians should fluctuate between RM1 (S\$0.32) to RM3 (S\$0.97) per kg daily, which would not affect the price of durian in Singapore much.

Others found that the supply of durians this year was better.

Mr Teo told CNA that supply increased for Durian 26 by more than 20 per cent after a good harvest, while Mr Phua said that demand from China had gone down a “little bit” this year compared to 2020, which means more durians are making their way to Singapore.

Mr Phua added that Malaysia’s Movement Control Order, the country’s national COVID-19 lockdown, had not really affected his supply of durians.

Durian fan Tay Yinghui said that she would be waiting at least another week before taking the plunge, as she is “a bit price conscious”.

“Consumers like me who wish to save on money would wait for better prices before purchasing,” she said, adding that she found prices to be better at the end of the durian season as sellers would be trying to clear their stock.

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