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## French picnic firm sparks Singapore food fight



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An upmarket French picnic organiser which said popular Singapore delicacies were not welcome at its debut event in the city-state was forced to eat humble pie Wednesday.

Diner en Blanc, where participants are required to dress entirely in white and bring their own food, provoked outrage after it told food blogger Daniel Ang to take down a post recommending Singaporean dishes for the occasion.

They told him that "local delicacies were not in line with the image of the picnic", he wrote.

Ang's suggestions included typical hawker centre fare such as Hainanese chicken rice, chwee kueh -- steamed rice cakes topped with diced preserved radish -- and tau huay, a soya bean pudding slathered with syrup.

With calls mounting for a boycott of Thursday's event -- the firm's first in Asia -- despite an initial apology, Diner en Blanc issued another 500-word confession on its website Wednesday, addressed to "Dear Singapore".

"The most serious error involved a comment -- posted on Facebook -- that said local food wasn't welcome. This was wrong and was withdrawn, corrected and apologies tendered," it said.

"However, the damage lingers. This is the cause of much regret and disappointment."

Singaporean dishes would not be turned away, it added.

"All food is welcome -- of whatever background or taste. Ultimately this is a personal choice -- your choice -- and we embrace that."

The Straits Times newspaper reported that at least 10 people who had signed up for the picnic were now boycotting it, while objectors had retaliated by organising four rival dining events, three of them on Thursday.

"If you are going to hold a party at my house, I welcome you with open arms, I respect your rules but please respect your hosts as well," Ang said on his blog.

"My Singapore local delicacies are the classiest food ever in our hearts. You can disrespect me as a blogger, and disrespect my blog post, but you do not disrespect my culture."

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