



Mr Preston Wong (above) is a co-founder of Treatsure, which lists eight hotels – including Hotel Jen Tanglin Singapore – that allow users to pack home food from their buffet restaurants up to an hour before closing time for \$10 a box. ST PHOTO: WONG AH YOKE

Pay \$10 for a food box and reduce waste with Treatsure

Treatsure is an idea to cut food waste hatched by two young Singaporeans during their final year of studies at the National University of Singapore.

Mr Preston Wong was reading accountancy and law, while Mr Kenneth Ham was studying computer science. But the entrepreneurial duo decided to develop an app to fill a gap in the fight against food waste – reducing the amount of food thrown away by buffet restaurants at the end of each meal.

The app, which is free to download and sign up, currently lists eight hotels that allow users to pack home food from their buffet restaurants up to an hour before

closing time for \$10 a box. There is also a cafe on the app.

The app was launched in September 2017 with a bakery in MacPherson that has since dropped out, citing manpower problems.

The Grand Hyatt was the first hotel to sign up, in August last year. Other hotels now on the app include Fairmont, Novotel and Hotel Jen.

The hours for each merchant are listed on the app.

At the restaurant, users scan in a QR code to buy a box. They can buy more than one box, though some outlets set a limit of four boxes.

Payment is made on the spot to the restaurant. Treatsure takes a cut, but declines to say how much it is.

The hotels provide their own boxes, which are made from biodegradable material and slightly bigger than the typical styrofoam food box. Customers can pack as much food as they want as long as they can close the box.

To ensure food does not get contaminated, some of the restaurants' staff offer verbal reminders to consume the food quickly or keep it chilled. Some hotels also put a time stamp on the box stating when the food is prepared.

Some impose a rule that stops customers from packing raw food. Others insist on raw and cooked food being segregated, and customers who wish to pack both

have to buy two boxes.

The app has attracted more than 6,000 members, but user rate has remained modest – probably because of the limited hours the service is available. Some hotels also set a limit on the number of boxes they sell each day.

According to Mr Wong, up to 20 boxes are sold in total each day. The Grand Hyatt says its halal buffet restaurant Straits Kitchen sells about half a dozen boxes a day.

The app recently also included an option for online purchases of surplus and “ugly” fruit and vegetables. These are purchased directly through the app and delivered to the customer.