

style Heartwarming Presents

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Zuliana aims to make pregnancy an even more enriching experience

In addition to the proverbial stork, expectant mothers in Malaysia now have even more little bundles of joy to look forward to. Recently launched is the subscription service, Before She Pops, which curates thoughtful gift boxes for pregnant women to be delivered each trimester. Said to be the first of its kind in Malaysia, it has already won numerous fans in Kuala Lumpur.

"The idea came to me when I was in my third trimester. I was working from home because I wanted to rest and didn't want to stress myself out," says Zuliana Zulkiflee Abbas, founder and



CEO of Before She Pops. "Feeling somewhat confined, I thought it would be nice if I could have things that I would need for my pregnancy, such as herbal tea and body oil, delivered to me."

At that point, she found that she was too tired to go out looking for these items. She was also still recovering from an exhausting first trimester when she suffered terrible morning sickness. "Scrolling through Instagram, it struck me that it would be wonderful to have a gift box in which all these essentials could be delivered to pregnant women as a special treat."

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As it was her first pregnancy, the 30-year-old admits there was a lot she did not know. "Needless to say, I was constantly Googling to check what was safe to take. So I wanted to provide something that was worry-free, one less thing for pregnant women to worry about. We selected items that are 100% safe for pregnant women; these are natural products that are also organic wherever possible."

Practicality rules during the selection process. "We don't include random filler items or sample-size products; mothers need full volumes to see them through the pregnancy and beyond. Everything in the box is well-thought out and it has a certain aesthetic to it as well," she shares, adding that it makes her really happy to see the products ultimately proven to be useful to her customers.

Zuliana chooses small local businesses run by women to partner with and she is thrilled to support the rising entrepreneurs behind them. One such venture, Nails On Wheels, provides relaxing salon services like manicures, pedicures and waxing in the comfort of one's own home. "We thought that would fit well with pampering pregnant women. Massage for pregnant women is something that we're looking into as well."

Meanwhile, Daya Botanica provides a great range of all-natural nourishing body oils for stretch marks. From Nuhaa Botanicals come delightful foot soaks and bath salts, while Dirty Benefits adds exceptional skincare to the mix. There are even a few surprises in store.

"Meeka Home does very nice soy candles and Krua has incredible kitchenware, so we were able to get a bit creative by collaborating with them. We turned a small dish into a pretty jewellery holder, the idea for which came when water retention hit and my finger could no longer fit my wedding ring," she laughs.

Then, of course, there is Tinytype, helmed by her own sister Zurisha, which is responsible for the sophisticated stationery and recyclable packaging. Sustainability is especially important to Zuliana, who holds a Masters in Environment (Sustainable Cities & Regions) from the University of Melbourne and was previously a senior sustainable design consultant and project manager at green engineering consultancy Neapoli.

Juggling a new business while raising her adorable baby Dina, Zuliana describes the journey to motherhood as an adventure. "You roughly know where you're heading but you have no idea what is going to happen along the way. One day you think you're fine and the next a different symptom appears, be it vomiting or a backache."

Hence her target market comprises the next generation of urban pregnant women who are well aware of the options available to them today, a growing awareness she also hopes to contribute to. "Since they are curious and do a lot of reading on what they are going through each trimester, when they get the box they know the reason behind each of its contents."

That said, the boxes also serve as an excellent educational platform in line with a recent shift that sees more and more people emphasising the equal importance of both the journey and the destination of parenthood. "Previously, the focus was only on the baby. Now, women are focusing more on the journey towards motherhood than just the destination itself. They know that by taking care of themselves, it will hopefully lead to fewer complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Hopefully, it also results in a stronger body, a healthier mind, and most importantly, a healthy baby. After all, the baby's wellbeing begins with the mother."

She adds that it is a good way for husbands to get involved as well. "Husbands are now taking a more hands-on approach," she points out. "They do want to get involved."

Some of them, she says, also do their share of research to the point where they are prepared with dry biscuits and water whenever their wives feel nauseous. "This is another way for them to learn more and show that they know what their wives need."

She is keen to reach out to these women by way of beautiful and helpful gifts. "This is my way of encouraging mothers. Take it easy; you're doing the best you can. Don't stress too much as you're definitely not alone."

Next on the agenda is After She Pops, with similar gift boxes for new mothers. "We've heard from so many women who fell in love with our products but have already given birth. To be honest, pampering shouldn't stop after that as taking care of yourself is very important during the confinement period as well," she smiles.

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