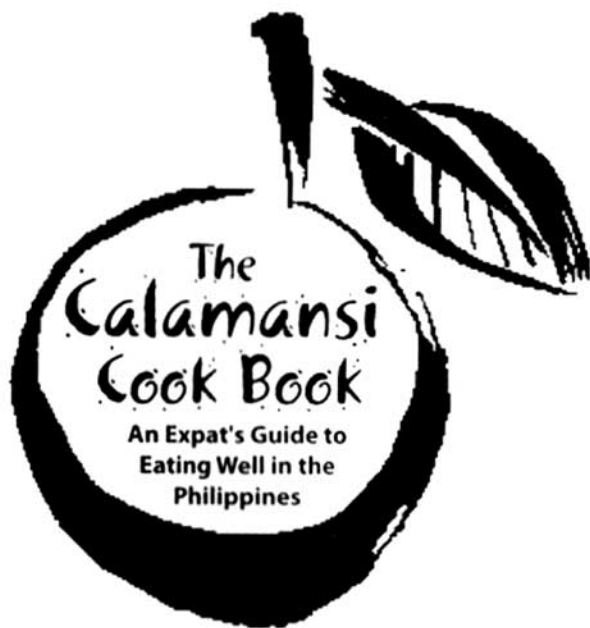


The
Calamansi
Cook Book

An Expat's Guide to
Eating Well in the
Philippines

Tilman Baumgärtel





Tilman Baumgärtel

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Published and exclusively distributed by
ANVIL PUBLISHING, INC.
8007-B Pioneer Street, Bgy. Kapitolyo,
Pasig City 1603 Philippines
Sales & Marketing:
(632) 6373621, 6375141
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Fax: (632) 637-6084
Web site: www.anvilpublishing.com

Cover and book design by Ibarra Crisostomo

ISBN 978-971-27-2178-6

Printed in the Philippines

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Introduction



Let's start with the *queso de bola*.

Queso de bola is a round cheese covered with red wax that looks like Dutch *Edam* to the impartial observer. I bought my first *queso de bola* in a Manila supermarket a couple of weeks after I first arrived in the Philippines from Germany. I tried to cut a slice out of it and found out that it was hard as stone and that once I was able to cut a slice, it tasted like no Dutch cheese I had ever encountered before. It was just appalling.

I complained to everybody who cared to listen about that awful cheese. But I was wrong. I had ventured into a country that has a tremendously rich culinary history, amazing food, and some of the most unbelievable

ingredients that I have ever encountered. Instead of taking home wonderful tropical fruits, exotic vegetables, or seafood from the supermarket, I bought this sad caricature of a European cheese because that was what I was used to back home.

I had not yet understood the culinary treasures that were right in front of my eyes. Once I started to explore, I learned that the *queso de bola* originated from the Spanish colonial period of the Philippines. It was imported from Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries to give the Spanish colonizers a taste of home. How it came into the Philippines is not quite clear. Maybe via the then Dutch-occupied Indonesia? For some reason, it has become a staple of the Philippine *pasko* (Christmas). Christmas dinners and gift baskets during that time of the year do not seem complete without it. Yet, the *queso de bola* somehow does not fit into a tropical country, where the climate is hostile to the production of European-style cheese.

If you buy a *queso de bola* in July, as I in my ignorance did, chances are that you get a leftover from the last Christmas season, which nobody bothered to remove from the shelves half a year ago—that's why it was so hard. This type of "cheese" is only in demand in December, when big quantities are dumped at the local supermarkets for high prices, and is typically sold out in early January, where nobody bothers about this weird combination of dried milk, corn starch, and other unpleasant components anymore.

So once I ruled out *queso de bola* as a cheese option, I frequented Manila's delis that sell imported Swiss, Dutch, Spanish or Italian cheese. I ended up paying a lot of money for cheese that turned into watery fragments after a couple of days in the fridge.

Then I discovered *kesong puti*, a fantastic cottage cheese from the milk of the local *carabao* (the water buffalo you see all over the Philippine countryside). In my opinion, it leaves some expensive Italian buffalo mozzarellas in the dust. After that discovery, I never went back to the deli for my fix of Gruyere.

This book was conceived to keep newcomers from Western countries to the Philippines from making my beginner's mistakes. What I learned from the *queso de bola* experience was this: If you try to faithfully recreate your favorite dishes from your home country in the Philippines, you will be frustrated. You will find yourself travelling to remote speciality food stores just to find out that they just ran out of semolina or mayoram, manchego or mint jelly. Or you can go with the flow, discover the local condiments, and most likely, you will never go back to your old ways.

In the Philippines, you have fresh food available at reasonable prices, that European celebrity chefs would give their best-loved chopping knife for. The best mangoes on the planet! Fresh, rare seafood at rock-bottom prices!

Every exotic Asian vegetables that you have only read about in speciality cooking books! Fresh coconut milk, not the canned stuff! Award-winning, 15-year-old rum for the price of a bottle of cheap French table wine! And sophisticated spices like pandan that you will never find fresh in your supermarket at home! You might not have noticed it yet, but you have stumbled into foodie's paradise.

The Philippines is a country where food, cooking, and eating are major concerns of almost everybody. It tells you something about the country's culinary culture when people greet you by asking a concerned "Have you eaten yet?" rather than with "How are you doing?" The Philippines might not be Thailand or Japan in terms of culinary sophistication, but food is at the heart of this country's concerns. The popular dishes were not refined at the emperor's court as in China before they were adapted by the masses. Philippine food is the food of poor people: simple, filling, and using anything that is edible.

Not all local food will appeal to you, but I promise you that you will have so many new ingredients to play around with here that you will not get bored. If you do not eat well in the Philippines, it is because you have not bothered to familiarize yourself with local provisions. It is easy to slip into a routine of steaks, hamburgers, and potatoes as they are available everywhere. But if you are more discriminating, you can eat better, healthier, and have

more choices in the Philippines than your own country where vegetables come from greenhouses, fruits are grown in industrialized farms on depleted soil, and meat is “produced” in a factory-like environment. If you know where to shop and what to buy, you will never eat any fruit or vegetable again that has touched pesticide. Or eat any dish that contains preservatives or MSG.

To enjoy cooking and eating in the Philippines, you must understand what blessings of the land are available to you and take it from there. This book means to help you with that. It does not mean that you have to eat Filipino food all the time. Many Western dishes can be made successfully with local ingredients. There are some Filipino dishes that you will also learn to appreciate quickly. This book presents a selection of “Western” recipes (with some Asian favorites thrown in for good measure) that you can make easily with the provisions available in every supermarket in the Philippines. And it includes a selection of Filipino dishes that please the Western palate. They all taste great. This is my own private book of recipes that I gathered during my five years in this often bewildering country.

The book does not reinvent cooking or present original recipes. Almost none of the dishes presented in this book are my inventions. I am deeply indebted to many Filipino cooks, chefs, fruit and vegetable vendors, food enthusiasts, *ates*, and *lolas* for providing me recipes, advice,

and information on local ingredients and food stuffs in general.

Neither is this books an introduction to Philippine cuisine. A growing number of sophisticated cook books and food blogs will educate you on the highly varied (and often complicated) preparation of many local dishes. A list of recommended cooking books and websites is included in the appendix.

Most of the recipes included are not difficult to follow, one reason being that many of the world's finest and most complex-tasting dishes are simple to prepare as long as you have good ingredients. I take into account that you most likely came here to work and will not have all day to come up with good, healthy food for you or your family. The recipes are meant to be cooked daily without too much fuss.

Finally, this is not a book on “fusion cuisine.” Fusion to me is an inevitable outcome of globalization. Most of what gets presented under this moniker are arbitrary and gimmicky combinations of ingredients that Mother Nature never meant to end up in the same cooking pot. “Fusion cuisine” has been a fact of life since Marco Polo travelled to China or Zheng He “discovered” East Africa. Most traditional German Christmas cookies and cakes depend heavily on typically Asian spices. And the *kusina* of the Philippines itself is a fine example of how Malay, Chinese,

and European elements blend into something unique and at the same time absolutely local. What I put together here is not a questionable attempt to huddle together food from my own European background with Southeast Asian elements. It is simply healthy, wholesome, and straightforward food that everybody should be able to enjoy.

With some recipes, I have given alternative versions of my recipes that make extensive use of typical Philippines condiments. These versions are marked with a “Localizer” tag. At the same time, I occasionally gave different, more sophisticated versions of the same dish that might need hard-to-get ingredients. These are marked with an “Upgrade” tag. I have included dishes from soups to deserts, from roasts to vegetables, and salads that have been tried, perfected, and enthusiastically devoured many times in my own home. All servings are good for four to five people. If this book helps you and your family to eat healthy and well in your first year in the Philippines without having to run to your expat supermarket too often (and blow a lot of money there), it has served its purpose. After that you might go home or you will be ready to come up with your personal version of Filipino cooking.

This book is called *The Calamansi Cook Book* in deference to the local lime-like fruit that is so tasty and so versatile that you will soon wonder how you ever did without it in your cooking. The *calamansi* is healthy,

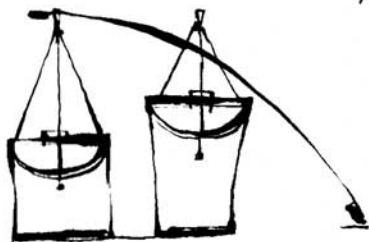
cheap and omnipresent in the Philippines. It can be used in everything from soft drinks to beef steak, from desserts to dips, and from dressings to cocktails. It always gives the dish a special twist.

While many Filipinos think of the *calamansi* as local fruit, I have seen it in restaurants and markets in Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. At the same time, it is completely unknown in the West. It seems to be a hybrid of the genera *Citrofortunella*. How it came about, nobody knows. Not even its exact biological definition is very clear. It seems to be a cross between the *Citrus reticulata* (the tangerine or mandarin) and the *Fortunella margarita* (kumquat).

All this is open to dispute, but one thing is certain: The *calamansi* is small but surprisingly powerful and insistent. I used it in the title of this book because of its Filipino-ness. It is more sophisticated than most people realize and not as indigenous as they assume. A hybrid—what better way to describe the Philippines? I have a glass of *calamansi* juice every day.

Tilman Baumgärtel
Quezon City, March 2009

Eating Well in the Philippines



Some advice on shopping, storage, and cooking for the expatriate

1 Locate the nearest farmers market

The organic or farmers markets in the Philippines are not only a good source for healthy fruits, vegetables, and other. They can be regular gastronomic schools. You will find odd fruits and vegetables that supermarkets do not carry. You can discuss with the vendors how to prepare their merchandise. Many bring their wares directly from their farms in the Cordilleras, Laguna, or Batangas so you can be sure that you get fresh food.

Unlike the farmers markets in the provinces, markets in Manila often carry European food that is not native to the Philippines such as rucola, majoram, Italian basil, *pesto*, sauces and spreads, whole wheat bread, and cow milk products such as quark, ricotta, or yoghurt. While the bigger supermarkets will have some of these, they are often heavily processed, not so fresh, and much more expensive. You can also buy local baskets, ceramics, candles, antiques, and jewelry in the *tiangge* section of the market.

However, the main reason for going to these markets is to discover Philippine food in all its glory and occasional weirdness. I go to the organic market at the Lung Center in Quezon City almost every Sunday morning. That there are other similar markets in Manila on Saturday mornings on Salcedo Street in Makati and Narra Park in Alabang and on Sunday mornings in Legazpi Village, Makati. Then there is Market! Market! at Fort Bonifacio that delivers a more sanitized shopping experience, and Tiendesitas along C5 in Pasig City that doesn't carry a lot of fruits et al but local delicacies such as organic rice, fish sauce, rice wine, etc. I prefer the regular markets as they are more informal and cheaper.

A visit to the market is a sensual experience. Not only can you indulge in artful presentations of beautiful fruits, watch chicken being slaughtered, and buckets of toads

waiting for a person with an odd taste for amphibians. There are often improvised *carinderias* that serve home cooking that is much better than a lot of dishes found in restaurants. I often run into friends or colleagues, and we chat, while the kids munch on a stick of barbecue or a rice cake. Make a visit to the market a habit.

2 **Look for fruits and vegetables without stickers**

Even at the farmers markets, some vegetables and fruits still come from huge farms, often identified by little stickers on the produce. Some farms have few qualms about spraying their fruits and vegetables with generous doses of pesticides and insecticides. I usually look for the vendors with the smallest stalls and merchandise that does not look picture-perfect. They are the equivalent of the organic food stores in your country. They sell stuff straight from their own backyard that they cannot eat themselves. They do not use herbicides but do their own weeding. If they use fertilizer at all, it is organic. It helps to talk to the vendors to find out where they get their wares. Stalls that explicitly claim that their merchandising is organic should be safe.

And then: do eat those fruits! My daily merienda is a fruit salad.

3 **Talk to your helpers**

At the turn of the century, the Spanish colonizers had their household helpers carve little landscape scenes onto the *santol* fruit that they had for dessert. While this might seem excessive today, count yourself lucky if you have help at your house. Your helpers will take over the most time-consuming cooking procedures (and Southeast Asian cuisine is rich in cooking methods that take forever—think of the Vietnamese *pho* soup that needs to be cooked, for 24 hours). They might never accept the fact that you eat your dinner with a *fork* and *knife* rather than with a *spoon* and *fork*. But if taught how to do it, they will bake excellent bread or make a killer *rösti*.

Your helpers are excellent sources of information on local food and cooking techniques. There is a complementary class on Southeast Asian cooking waiting for you—just ask. From how to wash rice to how to extract coconut cream, from how to tie lemon grass and pandan leaves into a proper knot for cooking to locating herbs at the empty lot down the streets, there is a lot to be learned from your household help. I always look at what our helpers cook for themselves and ask for samples. Occasionally, I discover a winner.

While your helpers will not carve still lifes anymore, they often will cut little patterns into carrots and the like or cut your mango into a beautiful flower. A bit of the high art of Chinese vegetable and fruit carving has trickled down into the more plebeian cuisine of the Philippines.

4 Put everything under seal

Ants and other insects love your food, and they are everywhere. Among your first acquisitions should be assorted plastic containers with screw tops or such to store sugar, pasta, rice, flour, etc., or else you will find little crawlers devouring your supplies. Do not leave any dishes with leftovers in the sink. Empty the trash can frequently. Otherwise, you will find cockroaches and other unpleasant visitors having a *fiesta* in your kitchen.

5 When shopping in supermarkets, take your time and have a plan B

“Out of stock” or “not available”—these two phrases belong to the standard vocabulary of every sales clerk in the Philippines. The distribution of food in Metro

Manila and the provinces has its bugs which become more frequent during the rainy season when main streets turn into waterways and delivery trucks break down left and right. Despite the fact that the average size of an SM or Robinson's supermarket rivals airport hangars, they will occasionally run out of the most mundane items, such as unsweetened pineapple juice, cassava roots, or yoghurt. If you insist that you want to eat Tandoori chicken in yoghurt sauce tonight, you might end up spending a lot of time looking for one ingredient. As it is almost impossible to leave a Philippine supermarket in less than half an hour due to their size and the long lines at the checkout, it is often wiser to pursue another option.



Eat out

The restaurant scene in Manila is unrivalled in its international nature and variety in Southeast Asia. Only Singapore can hold a candle to the culinary diversity that you find in Manila. But compared to Jakarta, Bangkok, or Kuala Lumpur, Manila is the best possible location in the region if you relish international food. You can have a Singaporean *kopi bun* for breakfast, New Orleans *gumbo* for lunch, a German *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte* for *merienda* and *pad thai* for dinner. Despite coming from

Europe, I had my first French *coc au vin* and my first Italian *ossobuco* in Manila. And they were good. Western cuisine seems more popular than the cooking of the neighbouring countries. It is easier to find pizza or doughnuts than good Indonesian *sate* or Singaporean Chicken Rice in Manila.

Local restaurants that serve international cuisine often “Philippinize” their dishes which usually means that they add more salt and sugar and some extra shots of cooking oil. (I sometimes suspect that some restaurants even put soy sauce in Italian pasta sauces and German roast gravy!) However, due to the international mobility of Filipinos, you will find restaurants where the chef cooks like he learned his craft from an Italian grandmother or a Japanese grandmaster, and chances are that he actually did!

There are many expats who stayed in the Philippines and started restaurants serving the cuisine of their respective countries. Ask around a little, and you will find the real deal. Otherwise, check the food section in English-language newspapers. Filipinos are passionate about food, and there is ample information available on cooking and restaurants in the papers and on the Internet.

7 Explore Philippine food!

Carlos Celdran, a professional tour guide of Manila (www.celdrantours.blogspot.com) opened my eyes to the character of Philippine cooking when he compared it to African-American soul food. The offspring of American slaves in the South made a virtue out of “making do” with the ingredients at hand. Filipinos also find ways to cook and eat almost everything edible. Leaves, sprouts, or animal parts that others would not consider fit for consumption have become staples in Philippine cooking. Examples include *crispy pata* (pig’s feet), *kare-kare* (oxtail), or *sisig* (pig’s snout and ears). These dishes often look unappetizing even though they frequently taste better than they look and can be rather heavy, fatty, oily, or all of the above, probably due to the Spanish and American influences on the *kusina*.

Philippine cuisine has its share of gross-out food. Many dishes could be (or actually are) the material of *Ripley’s Believe It or Not* or books like Jerry Hopkin’s *Extreme Cuisine*. Among these dishes are *balut* (a fertilized duck egg with a nearly developed embryo inside, also known as “duck abortion”), *camaro* (sautéed crickets), and *pinikpikan* (a chicken beaten to death with a stick before cooking to improve the flavor). Be careful when you mention *aso sena* (dog stew). The term “dog eater” is a

pejorative for Filipinos. Merely mentioning it is considered to be an insult. To me, however, the most revolting food items are the ones that combine cheese with sweet foods such as cheese ice cream or the *ensaymada*, a sweet roll with grated cheese on top.

Yes, Filipino cooking is an acquired taste. Do not reject the local cuisine after disappointing experiences in restaurants. The best food is usually cooked at home. Once Filipinos invite you to their parties, you will discover that there is more to their cooking than *pancit canton* and *adobo*.

However, what many foodies and cook books describe as Filipino food, might be a dying phenomenon. It seems that these days many Filipinos live on instant noodles, potato chips, *pan de sal*, fried chicken, and hamburgers. Due to the unfortunate influence of American fast and convenience food, many people, who often can afford to eat better, resort to this unhealthy and fattening diet.

This also means that many amazing local traditions of eating and cooking are in the process of getting lost. Many people from the so-called C and D classes live on less than 50 US cents a day, and have little choice but to consume nothing but rice, canned sardines and corned beef day in and day out. Keep in mind how privileged you are in terms

of eating (and in many other respects) and try to make a difference for those less fortunate than you.



Know your vendors

In the Philippines people from all over the world tried to recreate their own national cuisine. The Spanish, Americans, and Japanese colonizers as well as immigrants and tourists from China, Western Europe, or Korea have all left their mark on the food market. It is easier to find foreign provisions, from *Camembert* to *kami*, from *gnocchi* to *kimchi*, in the Philippines than in other Southeast Asian countries.

Despite my advice to stick to local produce for your cooking, you might occasionally need some exotic ingredients. Most large supermarkets have “International” and “Asian” sections where you can find Malaysian *sambal oelek*, Japanese *ramen* noodles, or Italian *pesto*. Various stores cater to the needs of cooks who subscribe to certain national cuisines. Ask other expats from your country where they shop.

From my experience, the *Santis* chain (www.werdenberg.com/santis), which has branches all over

Manila, is a reliable source for European ingredients. As it is a Swiss store, it has food not only from Switzerland but also from neighboring Germany, France, and Italy. If you want salami or pizza crusts, Dijon mustard, pumpernickel, or dill sauce, look there first. For specifically German provisions, check the German Deli (www.germandeli.ph) or Mickey's Delicatessen in Makati.

There is a huge number of Japanese and a growing selection of Korean stores in Manila and some provincial towns where you can find *miso*, *dashi*, or buckwheat noodles. I do not have specific recommendations, but they are easy to find if you look for them.

9 **Grow your own herbs**

A little kitchen garden for fresh herbs and spices is a good idea everywhere in the world. In the Philippines the tropical weather makes it easy to grow many herbs if you have a small garden, a balcony or a *lanai*. Some plants might be sensitive to the hot sun or strong rain. A good number of herbs died on me, but after some trial and error, I figured out which of them liked strong sunlight and which had to be kept in the shadow. I have basil, mint, pandan, lemon grass, turmeric, oregano, thyme, rosemary, and

chives in my garden. I bought some in pots from the market. Others I grew from seeds I brought from Germany. Chili, lemon grass, or oregano might grow abundantly on an empty lot in your neighborhood for everybody to harvest so keep your eyes peeled.

10 **And finally, buy a rice cooker**

Rice is the staple food of Asia, and you should make a habit out of eating it as long as you are here. It is healthy and economical. Rice cookers are a fascinating example of applied cybernetics. With one of these neat machines, cooking rice is as simple as ABC. They are cheap, work forever, and you can prepare not only regular rice but also more sophisticated varieties such as coconut rice or *Nasi Minyak*.

Meat and Poultry



We try to keep our meat consumption low, but we are not vegetarians, and I enjoy a good roast or a well-done barbecue. Here is a list of meat and poultry dishes that we frequently have at home. Filipinos are carnivores, and they have some awfully good meat dishes. I include some of them together with the more Western dishes that I brought from Germany.

PORK

Pork Adobo

Adobo is the national dish of the Philippines. It is a comfort food for locals and foreigners alike. Besides, it is easy to make and requires only a handful of ingredients that are not hard to find. It is a good way to start your experiments with Philippine cuisine. There must be as many recipes for *adobo* as there are households in the country. This is the one we make at home, and it never fails to please both Filipino and foreign visitors. It can be prepared with pork or chicken.

While many consider *adobo* a colonial legacy from the Spanish period (*adobo* means marinade in Spanish), some food historians claim that this dish existed even before the *conquistadores* came. It makes sense as it uses a lot of vinegar, the method that is a native means to cure meat before the advent of the fridge. Play around with additional ingredients to come up with your very own *adobo*.

Ingredients:

1 kilo pork, cut in bite-sized cubes, not too lean, or 1 kilo chicken breasts, cut in cubes or half a kilo of each

5 tbsp. white vinegar
10 tbsp. soy sauce
4 bay leaves
1 small can of pineapple chunks
4-5 cloves of garlic, crushed
Crushed black pepper to taste
1 red onion
2 cubes pork broth

Procedure:

Mix all ingredients, except the onion, pork broth cubes, and pineapple chunks, and let stand for a couple of hours. Simmer for approximately half an hour on low heat in a pan until the pork is well cooked. If you use pork and chicken, cook the pork for 10 minutes before adding the chicken. Remove from pan. Sauté onion in the remaining sauce.

Add cooked meat and the pineapple chunks. Simmer for 10 more minutes or until done. If the meat sticks to the pot, scrape it off. For some this is the real secret of a good *adobo*.

Use the pineapple stock to sweeten as desired.

Serve with white rice and a nice salad. I occasionally have had it with mashed potatoes. *Adobo* even goes

well with pasta, though most Filipinos would probably shudder to think of this combination. Leftovers are great on bread or *pan de sal*.

Upgrade:

Try the same recipe with squid instead of pork or chicken. Add some dried banana blossoms. If you want to experiment, consider playing around with ingredients such as milk, cream, rice wine, star anise, hot chilli peppers, or orange juice.

German Salt Roast (Salzbraten)

This must be one of the easiest recipes ever. It is ideal if you have a lot of hungry mouths to feed at a large dinner party. In my family, it is the traditional Christmas night roast. It leaves you a lot of time to focus on the more important tasks at hand such as decorating the tree, wrapping presents, attending mass, etc.

Ingredients:

- 1 kilo pork roast (or while you are at it, why don't you make it two or three kilos. It tastes great on a sandwich the next day.)
- 2-3 kilos of salt, depending on the size of the roast

Mustard

3 spoonfuls of *herbes de provence*, if you can find it.

(Provençal herbs, usually a combination of dried rosemary, marjoram, basil, bay leaf, and thyme, are available in supermarkets that sell European specialties. Better yet, use herbs from your kitchen garden, but you might need to scratch them off the finished roast.)

5 cloves of garlic

Procedure:

Cover the roast completely with mustard and interlard with the garlic. Sprinkle the herbs over the roast.

Cover a baking tray with aluminium foil. Pat the slightly moistened salt into a 2-centimeter thick rectangle in the pan.

Put the roast on the salt, and put it in the pre-heated oven (200 °C) for 90 minutes or two hours. You can take a walk, water the plants, or watch TV. Don't worry; the roast will not burn, as the salt will keep the meat moist. In the unlikely case that the mustard/spice mixture gets too dark, cover the roast with aluminium foil.

After taking the roast out of the oven, let it stand for 10 minutes. Scratch off dark spots from the roast,

take out the garlic, and serve sliced and lukewarm with garlic bread, a king-size salad and homemade mayonnaise or *remoulade* sauce.

Arroz a la Cubana

This dish must go back to the time when Spain ruled the world. In the “Empire on which the sun never sets,” recipes, ingredients and cooks travelled on the Spanish galleons from Latin America to the Philippines to Spain and back. I had this dish in a more or less identical version half way around the globe in Havana, Cuba. Talk about gastronomic globalization.

Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp. vegetable or corn oil
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 4 minced shallots
- 2 or 3 diced tomatoes (or 4 tbsp. tomato puree/ketchup)
- 300 g. pound ground beef
- 300 g. ground pork
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce
- Handful of raisins
- 1/2 tsp. salt

1/4 tsp. pepper
1 small can of sweet peas
5 tbsp. peanut or vegetable oil
3 ripe *saba* (plantain bananas), sliced
4 eggs (optional)

Procedure:

In a large stockpot, heat three tablespoons of oil and sauté the garlic until light brown. Add the shallots and cook until transparent. Add the tomatoes and cook for five minutes. Stir in ground beef, pork, and soy sauce. Cook until meat is brown. Add raisins, salt, and pepper and stir constantly. Add peas. Simmer for another five minutes.

In a separate skillet, heat three tablespoons peanut oil and fry plantain slices. Remove from heat and set aside. If you want to use eggs, put two more tablespoons peanut oil in the pan. Fry the eggs sunny side up. Set aside.

Serve with cooked rice topped with fried eggs and with a platter of fried bananas.

Pata Tim

To me this dish almost tastes “German.” But looking at the ingredients, it becomes obvious that this is a genuinely Asian Chinese dish. *Pata* or pork leg is a favorite part in Filipino cooking. No fiesta be complete without *crispy pata*, fried pork leg. This recipe is an example of the creative use of meat that more sophisticated cuisines might forgo.

Ingredients:

- 1 pork leg (*pata*)
- 1 liter soy sauce
- 1/2 liter white vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 stalk leeks, cut into strips
- Vegetable oil
- 1 small piece fresh ginger
- Brown sugar
- Sesame oil
- Rice wine
- 100 g. cornstarch
- Handful of dried mushrooms
- 1 star anise

Procedure:

Marinate the pork leg in soy sauce, vinegar, garlic and leeks overnight or for at least eight hours. Soak the

dried mushrooms for at least two hours in lukewarm water.

Fry pork leg in some oil until dark brown.

Boil leg in a big pot with water, star anise, one tablespoon of sesame oil, two tablespoons of soy sauce, a tablespoon of brown sugar, six tablespoons of rice wine, and the dried mushrooms till tender.

Add cornstarch (dissolved in a glass of lukewarm water), and cook till the sauce has the desired consistency

Serve with white rice and salad or stir-fried Chinese *pechay*.

Barbecue

If you have many guests, you might want to do a barbecue rather than prepare a roast. Here are one German and one Filipino recipe for a marinade which are both good for approximately one kilo of pork (cutlet, loin, shoulder or belly). Marinate overnight. Yes, the Filipino marinade contains Seven-Up.

German Barbecue Marinade

Ingredients:

2 bottles beer
1 head garlic
1 pinch chili sauce or *sambal olek*
1 tbsp. curry powder
1 tbsp. thyme
Salt and pepper to taste

Philippino Barbecue Marinade

Ingredients:

1 cup soy sauce
1/2 cup vinegar
1 head garlic
juice of one lemon or five calamansi
1 can 7-Up or Sprite
Chili peppers, brown sugar, and crushed black pepper to taste

Chicken Adobo, Marinduque Style

This is a variation of the ever popular *adobo* as it is cooked on the beautiful island of Marinduque. It proves that you need to invite yourself to people's houses to eat really good Filipino food. In the restaurants of Marinduque, they serve the regular *adobo*, and I only tasted this tasty chicken *adobo* when I requested it at our resort after heaving read about it in a tourist brochure.

Ingredients:

- 1 whole chicken
- Cooking oil
- 4 tbsp. vinegar
- Salt to taste
- Ground black pepper
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 slices ginger
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 onion, sliced
- Handful of pandan leaves
- Milk of two young coconuts

Procedure:

Cut the chicken into pieces and brown in a pan with some cooking oil.

Add chopped onion, minced garlic, grated ginger, pandan leaves, bay leaves, and vinegar.

Simmer for 15 minutes, occasionally turning the chicken pieces so they do not burn. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Add coconut milk and simmer for about 20 minutes. Serve with rice, pasta, or mashed potatoes.

Chicken Legs in Mustard Sauce a la Sir Matthias' Mom

The only reason this dish is in this collection is that it was passed on to me by our helper who learned it from the mother of her former employer, another German expat (the Sir Matthias mentioned above). I was so thrilled to learn a German recipe from a Filipina that I decided to share it. Since this dish already contains carbohydrates (potatoes) and vegetables, you do not need to serve it with anything else. A fresh salad is a nice side dish.

Ingredients:

6-8 chicken legs
1 kilo potatoes
1/2 kilo tomatoes
Mustard
1 liter milk
1 cube chicken broth
Salt
Pepper

Procedure:

Brush chicken legs with mustard and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Peel tomatoes and potatoes. Cut in quarters.

Put tomatoes, potatoes, and chicken legs in a large skillet. Fill the skillet with milk so everything is almost covered.

Put in an oven that has been preheated to 200°C and cook for 45 minutes or until well done.

Chicken Teriyaki

This is not a proper teriyaki which requires a number of ingredients that you will only find in Japanese speciality stores. With this recipe you are not left with hard-to-clean pans when caramelising the sugar that belongs in a real teriyaki sauce. Try this recipe with salmon, tuna, trout, mackerel, pork, beef, or lamb.

Ingredients:

- 4 chicken breasts
- 6 tbsp. soy sauce
- 2 tbsp. orange juice
- 2 tbsp. sesame oil
- 1 1/2 tbsp. fresh ginger, minced
- 2 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp. scallions, chopped
- Vegetable oil
- 4 tbsp. sesame seeds, toasted (optional)

Procedure:

Mix soy sauce, orange juice, sesame oil, ginger, and garlic until well blended.

Marinate the chicken breasts in the sauce in the fridge for half an hour.

Fry the chicken breasts in vegetable oil over medium-high heat until done.

Stir scallions into the marinade. Pour sauce over chicken breasts and let simmer for 10 minutes or until the sauce starts to get sticky. Sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds, if desired. Serve with rice.

Mango Chicken

I found this Western Samoan recipe on the website for the book *Eat Fat Lose Fat* by Mary Enig and Sally Fallon. I have no idea if their diet (based on the assumption that you can lose fat by partaking lots of coconut oil) works, but this dish is a great way to use some of the finest ingredients to be found in the Philippines. I adapted the original to suit the local situation.

Ingredients:

- 1 whole chicken
- 1 large onion
- 2 mangoes
- 2 tbsp. coconut oil or butter
- Salt
- Pepper
- 1/4 tsp. paprika
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- Grated rind of 2 *calamansi*
- 1 cup chicken stock
- Juice of 2 *calamansi*
- Milk of 1 mature coconut

Procedure:

Strew onion slices in a stainless steel baking dish. Arrange the mango slices in a layer on top of the onions.

Cut the chicken up. Place the breasts, legs and thighs, skin side up, over the mango.

Cook chicken stock out of the chicken backs and neck.

Mix coconut oil, salt, pepper, paprika, nutmeg, and *calamansi* rind and brush on chicken pieces. Bake at 200°C for about 1 1/2 hours or until chicken is nicely browned.

Remove chicken and mango slices to a heated platter. Pour chicken stock into a pot. Add the juice and onions and bring to a boil, scraping up coagulated juices. Reduce to a simmer and stir in *calamansi* juice and coconut milk.

Strain mixture into a sauce pan and reduce. Serve with rice or baguette.

BEEF

Beefsteak Tagalog (Bistek)

Still need further proof of the magical powers of the *calamansi*? Try this. It is simple yet absolutely *masarap*. It is difficult to imagine this recipe working with any other citrus fruit. It comes out great every time, even though it contains only four ingredients. You want it saltier? Add soy sauce. You want it more sour? Add *calamansi* juice.

Ingredients:

- 600 g. sirloin beef strips
- 4 tbsp. soy sauce
- Juice of 10-15 *calamansi*
- White or red onions or shallots
- Vegetable oil

Procedure:

Pound beef strips with a meat tenderiser.

Marinate the beef strips in a mixture of soy sauce and *calamansi* juice, preferably overnight but at least 30 minutes.

Take the beef strips out of the mixture and fry in a skillet with a spoonful of oil.

Once the beef is done, add the marinade and onion rings. Simmer for 10 minutes. It is important not to overcook the onion rings. If you want the sauce thinner, add water. If you want it thicker, add some flour.

Serve with lots of white rice or (the Euro-style variant) with mashed potatoes and a salad.

Kare-Kare

Kare-Kare, oxtail in peanut sauce, is a popular Filipino dish, but I do not like eating oxtail so I have replaced it with regular sirloin. Apart from that, it is pretty close to how *kare-kare* is typically cooked.

Ingredients:

- 1 kilo sirloin
- Vegetable oil
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 onion
- 1 banana flower
- 1 bundle string beans

2 eggplants
150 g. peanut butter or ground peanuts
100 g. rice
Salt
Pepper

Procedure:

Cut sirloin into bite-sized pieces.

Boil in one liter of water, preferably in a pressure cooker, until tender. Set broth aside.

Sauté garlic and onion in oil.

Add meat and 300 milliliters of beef broth to the sautéed garlic and onions. Reserve the leftover beef stock for a nice beef soup as a starter.

Cut the vegetables into bite-sized piece, add to broth and meat and bring to a boil. Cook until vegetables are done.

Add the peanut butter/crushed peanuts and stir the *kare-kare* until it has blended into the sauce.

Toast the rice in a pan and blend it in a blender or with a pestle in a mortar. Add to the *kare-kare*.

Simmer for five minutes.

Add more beef broth until you have the desired thickness. The *kare-kare* should be soupy, yet not too watery.

Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with rice.

Beef Rendang

This recipe is from Malaysia where *beef rendang* is a kind of national dish. There are variations of this dish in most Southeast Asian countries. Instead of beef, you may use chicken, mutton, water buffalo meat, duck, or even vegetables like jackfruit or cassava. You can experiment by adding shallots, cinnamon, coriander, cloves, shredded coconut meat, nutmeg, coriander, fennel seeds, or cumin seeds. You don't need to, though. This recipe is fantastic just the way it is. Leftovers are nice on toast or *pan de sal*.

Ingredients:

- 1 kilo beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 stalks lemon grass
- 1 stalk pandan leaves
- 4 cloves garlic
- Red chilli peppers or *sambal oelek* to taste

- 5 slices fresh ginger root
- 3 kaffir lime leaves
- 2 turmeric leaves
- 1 liter coconut milk either from the can or freshly squeezed

Procedure:

Put all the ingredients in a pot and cook them at low temperature for 90 minutes. Be careful with the chilli peppers or *sambal oelek* as they can make the dish terribly hot. Add water as needed. After 90 minutes the beef should be tender.

Remove the pandan leaves, lemon grass, ginger, the garlic, and kaffir lime leaves. You can either throw them all away or puree the garlic and ginger, and put them back in the pot for a more intense taste. (This is not for everybody.)

There are two kinds of beef rendang: wet and dry. If you want it wet, cook the meat in the remaining sauce until it has a sticky, oily consistency. If you want it dry, cook until all the liquid has evaporated, and the meat has absorbed all of it. Stir frequently to avoid burning the meat.

Serve with white rice or coconut rice and maybe a small salad.

Sour Roast (Sauerbraten)

Sauerbraten is as German as it gets. Originally from the Rhine area, it is served everywhere in Germany. Regions like Bavaria and Swabia have their own variation of this dish. Apparently, the idea to cure beef in vinegar and red wine came from the *conquistadors* of Germany, the ancient Romans. Supposedly, it was Julius Cesar himself who sent *amphoras* filled with beef marinated in wine and vinegar over the Alps to the newly founded Roman colony, *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*, better known today as Cologne.

I have included this dish because whenever I serve it to Filipino guests, they cannot get enough of it. I guess it is because of the vinegar, a taste familiar to them, while at the same time some of the other ingredients are foreign enough to make them exotic. It is a bit time-consuming but not difficult to cook. In Germany, marinated beef is sold to make *sauerbraten*, but in the Philippines, you have to do it yourself. Keep this dish in the fridge in its marinade for three or four days. Don't worry, it won't spoil. The vinegar preserves the meat.

Ingredients:

1–1.5 kilo top round beef

Marinade:

- 1 cup red wine
- 1 cup vinegar
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 whole cloves
- 1/2 tsp. crushed black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. juniper berries

(Stores that carry European foods such as Sânti's, often sell *Sauerbratengewürz*, pre-mixed combinations of these, and other spices (mustard seeds, dried celery, etc.). Feel free to use those as they make the hunt for hard-to-find spices easier.)

Gravy:

- 1 white onion
- 1 turnip
- 1 stalk celery
- 1 large carrot
- Handful of raisins
- 1 pack light cream or sour cream
- 1/2 tbsp. sugar
- Dash of starch
- Shaved almonds or crushed cashew nuts

Procedure:

Wash the meat. Put in a glass, plastic, or ceramic dish with a cover. The dish should not be larger than the roast so the marinade covers the meat.

Bring all the ingredients of the marinade to a boil in a cooking pot, let cool. Pour marinade over the meat, and store it in a closed container in the fridge for three or four days.

Take the meat out of the marinade. Pat it dry with a kitchen towel. Reserve the marinade.

Rub the meat with salt and pepper. Brown it from all sides in a pan with butter.

Clean and slice the onion, turnip, celery, and carrot. Sauté in the marinade. Don't worry if you cannot find turnips. It will still taste great without it.

Put the meat in a cooking pot. Pour half of the marinade over it and simmer for two hours. See to it that the liquid covers most of the meat without completely immersing it. Add marinade and water, if needed.

Take the meat out of the pot. Keep it warm. Remove

the bay leaves from the marinade. Puree the marinade in a blender. Add cream and sugar. If it is still too sour, add more cream or milk. Return the gravy to the pot. Add starch dissolved in warm water and raisins. Cook until gravy thickens.

Slice the roast. Arrange on a serving plate and pour the gravy over it. Sprinkle shaved almonds or crushed cashew nuts over the roast. Serve with potato dumplings that you can find pre-cooked in stores that carry German specialties, Spätzle, mashed potatoes, or German egg noodles. For some reason, this dish is never served with salad in Germany.

Fish



The selection of fresh fish and seafood at supermarkets and wet markets in the Philippines is incredible. Lovers of seafood will have a field day since the stuff is so cheap. Huge tiger prawns! Crabs fresh out of the sea! Gigantic snappers! Stingrays! All that for prices that are close to those of canned fish than fresh seafood in your home country. So indulge in all the exotic tropical delights you only heard about so far and some you have not even heard of before.

The “purest” way to prepare food is often the best. Just fry a kilo of peeled and deveined shrimps in olive oil with some garlic, eat them with a baguette, and you know what I mean. With the abundance of fresh seafood, there is no need for fancy recipes, outlandish sauces, and corny condiments.

A word of warning though: When *The New York Times* had the sushi of 20 top Japanese restaurants in New York tested, it turned out that half used tuna with mercury levels way above what is advisable to eat. I never heard of any such study in the Philippines. The seas around the Philippines are generally unpolluted, but you never know. To be on the safe side, I make a point out of never having the same kind of fish more often than once a week.

I try to get seafood from remote areas such as Mindanao, especially General Santos City, the “tuna capital of the Philippines.” And I try to avoid the blue fin tuna which contains more mercury than other kinds of tuna. But I have not suffered from acute mercury poisoning so far, it cannot be so bad after all!

Kinilaw

Many people call this Filipino sushi. That is not accurate as the fish in this dish is not raw. It is doused with vinegar and our old friend, *calamansi* juice. The citric acid causes the proteins in the seafood to become denatured which pickles or “cooks” the fish without heat. *Kinilaw* has more in common with the Latin American *ceviche*, a citrus-marinated seafood salad available in many variations in Peru, Chile, Ecuador, and Mexico. Some food historians have speculated that *ceviche* may have reached the

Philippines by way of Mexico and Latin America during the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade. Then again it might have have been the other way around. Anyway, it is a refreshing appetizer on a hot day.

Ingredients:

1/2 kilo raw tuna cut sashimi-style
Juice of 4 calamansi
1 red onion
1 small cucumber
Salt
Pepper
White vinegar (optional)

Procedure:

Cut the onion in thin rings. Peel the cucumber and cut into thin slices. Place onion, cucumber, and tuna cubes in a bowl.

In a separate bowl mix *calamansi* juice, salt, pepper, and a dash of vinegar for the marinade.

As the marinade cooks the tuna, do not add it too early. Ideally, the marinating period should not be longer than the time this dish needs to move from the

kitchen to the dining table. The perfect *kinilaw* is well-done on the outside but a little raw inside.

Upgrade:

Filipinos also use Spanish mackerel, oysters, shrimp, or whitebait instead of tuna.

Oven-baked Fish

This is one example of my theory that the best food is often the one easiest to cook with few, top-notch ingredients. This easy recipe does not call for fancy ingredients, but since you have this fantastic fresh fish available, the result is always remarkable. Remember that you will easily shell out around \$20 or more for a dish like this in a restaurant in any Western country. You can do this with any mid-size fish using aluminium foil or a baking tray.

Ingredients:

- 1 medium-size fish (bangus, red snapper, tilapia, or fish two steaks, (2 cms. thick)
- Fresh herbs (rosemary, basil, tarragon, dill, fennel)
- 2 cloves garlic
- Spoonful of butter
- Olive oil

Salt
Pepper
Juice of 2 *calamansi*
800 g. potatoes

Procedure:

Peel and quarter the potatoes. Put them on a baking tray. Drizzle with a little olive oil, rock salt, and fresh rosemary. Leave space for the fish. Cover with aluminium foil and shove into the oven that has been pre-heated to 220°C. Bake for 15 minutes.

While the potatoes bake away, clean the fish.

Stuff the herbs and garlic in the stomach of the fish, put a splotch of butter on top of the fish, and sprinkle with salt, pepper, and *calamansi* juice. Brush the foil with the tiniest amount of olive oil so the fish will not stick to it. Wrap fish in aluminium foil and put on the baking tray next to the potatoes. Take foil off the potatoes.

Bake for 20 minutes or until potatoes are golden brown and the fish is well-done.

Should you use fish steaks, place the herbs and garlic

on top of the steak, sprinkle with butter and *calamansi* juice, wrap in foil, and follow procedure above.

If you like more vegetables, bake some carrots, squash, or red onions with the potatoes. All vegetables should be cut into similar sizes, so they cook at the same time. Make sure that they do not get mixed in case some vegetables need to stay longer in the oven.

Upgrade:

For a fish dip, try this: Beat 100 milliliters of whipping cream with a pinch of salt and either half a tablespoon of grated horseradish (available at Sănti's) or wasabi which gives the mixture an uncanny, light green color. Another option is wasabi mayonnaise.

Localizer:

Instead of rosemary, basil, etc, use the Southeast Asian herb variant: a stalk of lemon grass, pandan leaves, cilantro or fresh ginger. Replace butter with olive oil.

Squid Adobo (Adobong Pusit)

Ingredients:

1 lb. medium-size squid
60 milliliters white vinegar
60 milliliters soy sauce
250 milliliters water
1 head garlic
2 onions
Freshly ground pepper to taste
1 tbsp. vegetable oil

Procedure:

Have the fish vendor wash and clean the squid thoroughly.

Cook the squid in a pan with the vinegar, minced garlic, pepper, soy sauce, and water for 20 minutes or until tender. Do not cook the squid too long as it can become tough. Drain, but do not pour away, the squid broth.

Clean the pan, then heat vegetable oil in it. Sauté the cooked garlic and onion.

Add the squid and simmer for 10 minutes. Pour squid broth over mixture, bring to a boil and cook until the sauce starts to thicken. Serve with rice.

Fish steak a la Ate Jennifer

Ingredients:

2 medium size steaks from tuna, *tanigue*, or the like
50 milliliters soy sauce
1 head garlic
Juice of 10 *calamansi*
Pepper
2 red onions
Olive oil

Procedure:

Marinate the fish steaks in soy sauce, *calamansi* juice, minced garlic and pepper for at least two hours.

Fry the steaks in olive oil for two minutes or until done. Sprinkle with sliced red onion, and simmer for five minutes. Or fry the onions together with the fish. Serve with white rice.

Shrimp in Coconut Sauce

Another refreshing recipe with a lemony aroma (the *calamansi* performing its wonders), this also works nicely with chicken.

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. fresh large shrimps, shelled and deveined
Juice of 4 *calamansi*
1 onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tbsp. white vinegar
1/2 tsp. sea salt
1 tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped
Milk of one mature coconut
Salt
Black pepper

Procedure:

Marinate the shrimps in lemon juice, onion, garlic, vinegar, and salt for 30 minutes. Place in a saucepan with cilantro and coconut milk, adding sea salt and black pepper to taste.

Simmer covered, for about 15 minutes until shrimps are cooked through. Serve with white rice.

Pasta, Noodles, and Egg Dishes



There are endless possibilities with pasta which you can do with local vegetables. I have included two traditional Italian preparations to get you going. But there is so much more that you can do with the veggies available at any supermarket. The spaghetti, penne, and other Italian noodles are of good quality, so nothing should keep you from making world-class pasta. Most supermarkets sell pesto, too, even though it is frequently a bit bland compared to the real thing from Italy. There is pasta salad, lasagna, pasta puttanesca, carbonara, alfredo, amatriciana, with chicken, seafood, etc. Once you think about it, you can spend weeks making different kinds of pasta.

Then there are all kinds of Asian noodles. I do not want to rehash the age-old debate if the Chinese or the Italians invented the noodle. Let's just say that they both came up with great recipes for it. So I have Asian noodle recipes that can be made with ingredients available all over the Philippines.

Pasta with Tomato Sauce

It is hard to beat a simple tomato sauce made out of fresh tomatoes. Surprisingly, the pale, yellowish tomatoes of the Philippines make great tomato sauces. Here is the most basic tomato sauce recipe I can come up with. It is a delight every time. Once you make it, you will never go back to tomato sauce from the can.

Once you have your tomato sauce, you can have endless fun with it. Fry 300 grams of mixed ground meat, add it to the tomato sauce, or use a can of tuna, some vegetables or whatever strikes your fancy. Or use the same as base for a superb Parmigiana. If you feel like experimenting, try the surprisingly tasty, localized version described on the other page that could easily be a hit at any fancy fusion restaurant.

Ingredients:

4 tbsp. olive oil
1 onion
1 clove garlic
1 lb. fresh tomatoes
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
A few leaves of fresh basil
1 oregano leaf
some basil leaves

Procedure:

Heat the oil in a saucepan. Add chopped onion, and cook over moderate heat until the onion translucent which should take five minutes.

Stir in the mashed garlic and chopped tomatoes. (No need to peel or deseed them as the blender will take care of that. Just cut off the stems.) Add three tablespoons of water. Season with salt and pepper. Add basil and oregano. Cook for 20–30 minutes.

Puree the sauce in a food blender. If the sauce seems to thin, simmer for another 10 minutes or until it is thick enough for your taste.

Serve with any kind of pasta. Sprinkle with Parmigiano, if available.

Localizer:

Instead of basil and oregano, try a stalk of lemon grass, two Kaffir lime leaves and a small piece of ginger. Do not forget to take them out before pureeing.

Eggplant Parmigiana

Once you have your tomato sauce, you are almost done with your Parmigiana. Fry the eggplants and you are almost there.

Ingredients:

3 large firm Euro-style eggplants (use the local ones only if you have no other choice)

200 g. *kesong puti*

Olive oil

Procedure:

Cut the eggplants in slices. Fry them in olive oil until they are well-done. Better yet, grill them so they do not get greasy. Let them cool on kitchen paper towel.

Get an earthenware dish or cake pan. Put a small layer of tomato sauce, then some eggplant.

Repeat these layers until you've used up all the ingredients. Top with crumbled *kesong puti*.

Put the dish in the oven and bake at 200°C for half an hour until the *kesong puti* is golden brown. Cover with aluminium foil if it gets brown too quickly.

Eggplant Parmigiana is best eaten with pasta, but it can also be served cold as an *antipasto*.

Mi Goreng

An Indonesian favorite, this has become popular all over the world. Feel free to use vegetables other than the ones I mention.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. uncooked soba or ramen noodles
- 2 tbsp. peanut oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 minced garlic cloves
- 1/2 inch ginger, peeled and grated
- 6 spring onions

- 1 cup snow peas
- 1 cup sprouts
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce, mixed with 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- 2 eggs, scrambled (optional)
- 1 piece firm tofu, drained and cubed (optional)
- 1 fried chicken breast

Procedure:

Prepare the noodles according to the package directions. Drain and set aside.

In a wok or large skillet, heat the oil. Add the cubed onion, minced garlic, peeled and chopped ginger. Stir fry until the onion is soft.

Stir in the spring onions, snow peas, and bean sprouts. Cook until tender and crisp.

Stir in the noodles and sweetened soy sauce.

Add the eggs, tofu, or chicken breast, if desired.

Mix thoroughly until heated through.

Korean Stir-fried Glass Noodles (Japchae)

Korean food is increasingly becoming popular in the Philippines as Koreans in search of a place in the sun and a cheap opportunity to learn English invade the country. Korean restaurants are opening left and right. Dishes such as *japchae* or *bibimbap* are on their way to become popular fast food items. The following recipe for the glorious, sticky Korean *tangmyon* glass noodles is vegetarian even though in Korea it is usually served with beef strips. *Japchae* is a side dish in Korea, but it can serve as a hearty meal in its own right.

Ingredients:

- 150 g. dried glass noodles (*tangmyon*, sometimes spelled *dangmyun*)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 carrots
- 2 spring onions
- 2 shiitake mushrooms (if desired)
- Vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp. sesame oil
- Soy sauce
- Sugar
- Salt
- Pepper
- Toasted sesame seeds (if available)

Procedure:

Cook the noodles in one liter of water until soft. This should take from four to five minutes. Drain well and set aside.

Heat one spoonful of vegetable oil in a wok or pan and stir fry the garlic for one minute.

Peel and julienne the carrots. Slice the spring onions.

Add one tablespoon of sesame oil and one tablespoon of soy sauce to the vegetable oil in the pan and fry the vegetables for three minutes or until tender.

Add the glass noodles and toss well. Season with soy sauce, salt, and pepper. Serve on a platter, sprinkled with toasted sesame seeds.

Pad Thai

This is another Asian noodle dish that has spread around the globe. As with Mi Goreng, use other vegetables if you have them in your fridge.

Ingredients:

- 250 g. rice noodles
- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. paprika
- 1 piece of firm tofu
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/4 cup chives, chopped to 1-in. length
- 1/4 cup ground roasted peanuts
- 1 cup bean sprouts
- 3 stalks spring onions

Procedure:

Soak the rice noodles in cold water for 30 minutes or until soft. Drain and set aside.

Fry the tofu, let cool on paper towel, and cut into cubes.

Heat oil in a large skillet. Add the garlic and stir fry.

Add the noodles and stir fry.

Add paprika. Stir fry the mixture until thoroughly combined.

Stir in the tofu and egg.

Turn the heat to high and cook until the egg sets, stirring gently.

Thoroughly combine the mixture, and continue cooking over medium-high heat for about two minutes until most of the liquid is reduced.

Serve garnished with bean sprouts, chopped spring onions, small banana blossom, a wedge of lime, and crushed, roasted peanuts.

Fresh Lumpia

This is the Philippine version of an Asian staple, the spring roll. There is also *lumpiang Shanghai*, a spring roll which requires a different kind of wrapper that you can find in the vegetable section of supermarkets and gets deep-fried in lots of boiling oil, a favorite *merienda* and party snack.

Ingredients:

2 large eggs
300 milliliters water
50 g. cornstarch
50 g. all-purpose white flour
Salt
3 tbsp. cooking oil
1 clove garlic
300 g. of ground meat (half pork, half beef)
1/4 lb. raw shrimp
1 large *singkamas*
1 carrot
2 onions
2 tsp. soy sauce
Black pepper
Salt
Fresh lettuce or cabbage leaves

Procedure:

In a bowl, whisk together eggs, water, cornstarch, flour, and salt until smooth.

Fry the batter in a pan like you were making omelettes which is essentially what you are doing. Let the wrappers cool.

For the filling, stir fry two chopped onions and mashed garlic in a pan or non-stick wok for 30 seconds. Add ground meat and shrimp. Stir fry for two minutes or until cooked. Remove from pan.

Stir fry carrot in vegetable oil in the pan for one minute. Add chopped onions; cook until vegetables are crisp. Return ground meat and shrimp mixture to pan. Add a dash of soy sauce, salt, and pepper to taste. Cook for one minute. Cool.

For each *lumpia*, place a piece of lettuce or cabbage on a wrapper. Spoon the filling into the wrapper and add the raw *singkamas*. Fold bottom third of wrapper over filling, then roll.

Serve with peanut sauce or with soy and Chinese *hoisin* sauce.

Torta

This involves burning the eggplants on the stove of a gas oven. Ideally you'll have a Filipino friend to show you how to do this the first time around. You might find that procedure weird, but it makes for an interesting, smoky taste. Filipinos often add ground meat to this omelette, but as you tend to eat so much meat in the Philippines anyway, chose the vegetarian version.

Ingredients:

- 4 local eggplants
- 4 eggs
- Milk
- Salt
- Pepper
- Vegetable oil

Procedure:

Burn the skin of the eggplants over the gas stove. To prevent the skin from bursting, pick little holes in it with a fork.

Peel the skin off after it has cooled.

Mix eggs with a little milk like you were making scrambled eggs. Add salt and pepper to the mixture carefully. Pour in a pan.

When the omelette starts to cook, add the slightly flattened eggplant, and turn it around. Do the same with the other three eggplants.

Vegetables and Vegetarian Dishes



Considering that the archipelago is surrounded by sea and criss-crossed by rivers full of tasty fish, it is stunning how dependent Filipino cooking is on pork, chicken, and beef.

Then there are all the wonderful fruits and exciting vegetables that provide you endless possibilities. Check what is in season, and take it from there. Here are some ideas.

Ratatouille

French cooks create all kinds of mystery around ratatouille, how every vegetable has to be cooked in a separate pot and only put together at the very end, etc. Do not let them intimidate you. This recipe is easier but tastes as good as the orthodox French version.

Ingredients:

1 kg. tomatoes
one large eggplant
2 zucchini
3 bell peppers
5 onions
1 clove garlic
Handful of fresh basilic, thyme, or parsley, if available
Olive oil
Salt
Pepper

Procedure:

Prepare a large cooking pot. Put plenty of olive oil.

Chop the onion, put it into the pot, and start cooking slowly. Chop and add the garlic.

Wash the bell peppers, cut into small strips, and stir them in.

Wash the tomatoes, chop them into big chunks, but do not peel them. Add them to your stew and stir well.

Add the herbs and pepper.

Cut the eggplant and zucchinis into big chunks, then throw them into the pot and cook until they are done. They need to be stirred frequently until they merge with the rest of the ingredients. Serve with rice or pasta.

Upgrade:

Some people like to add capers.

Pinoy Greens, Mediterranean Style

This is a nice way to eat all those puzzling local greens from the market. They are healthy, an important part of the local diet, cheap, and if you live in a neighborhood with empty lots, chances are you can pick some of them right there. I adapted a recipe by Jamie Oliver. Try what you like, and be prepared to be surprised by how good these leaves taste when given a Mediterranean twist.

Ingredients:

Two or three handfuls of assorted vegetables such as *taro* leaves, *gabi-gabi*, *kangkong*, *patchay*, even grated cabbage

Olive oil

1 clove garlic

Juice of two *calamansi*

One handful of *rucola* (optional)

Procedure:

Drop your greens in a pot with boiling salt water, and cook them until tender. That should not take longer than a couple of minutes, depending on what you use. If you use *rucola*, be sure to put it in last.

Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a pan and fry a finely sliced

glove of garlic, until it gets lightly brown. Strain the greens until dry, drop them into the hot oil, and stir.

Drizzle the *calamansi* juice over the greens. Stir some more until everything is covered by the marinade.

Serve warm or cold on a platter of antipasti. It is even better after a day in the fridge.

Gado-gado

Practically the national dish of Indonesia, this is very flexible to do. You can use any vegetables that you like. I list the ones that are commonly used in Indonesia. The peanut sauce can be used for other things, including *sate* (barbecued chicken) or even on toast so make an ample quantity. Freeze the sauce in ice cube makers, and thaw as much as you need for a certain dish.

Ingredient:

100 g. cabbage
200 g. Baguio string beans
4 carrots
100 g. bean sprouts, washed
250 g. firm tofu
Vegetable oil

Peanut Sauce

Ingredient:

- 1 tsp. peanut oil (or another vegetable oil)
- 1 tsp. ginger
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 2 tbsp. roasted and crushed peanuts (cheaters use crunchy peanut butter)
- Milk of one ripe coconut
- 2 tsp. palm sugar or brown sugar
- one dash of *calamansi* juice
- 1 small chilli (optional)

Procedure:

Fry the tofu in vegetable oil, drain on crumpled paper towels, cut in cubes, and set aside.

Peel the vegetables, and cut them into bite-size pieces. Boil them in a pot in two centimeters of water until tender.

For the peanut sauce: Heat the oil in a saucepan, add garlic, ginger, and chilli (if desired) to the pan. Sauté until fragrant. Add the crushed peanuts or peanut butter. Gradually mix in the coconut milk and then the

rest of the ingredients. Simmer until the mixture gets thick and slightly sticky.

Serve the vegetables and peanut sauce with rice. In Indonesia, boiled egg, prawn crackers, and roasted peanuts are often used as garnishes.

Banana Heart in Coconut Milk

This is a staple all over Southeast Asia and can be made with any vegetable you like: string beans, squash, eggplants, zucchini, you name it. I use banana heart, but you can replace it with your favorite vegetable. Just be sure that the vegetable is properly done. The cooking time might vary depending on what you use.

Ingredients:

- 1 banana heart
- Milk of one ripe coconut
- 1 big onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 stalk lemon grass
- 1/2 tbsp. grated ginger
- Pepper
- Cooking oil

Procedure:

Peel the banana flower and remove the outer red leaves. Cut in slices, salt, and let sit for half an hour.

Squeeze out the water. Fry garlic, sliced onion, and ginger in a pan.

Add coconut milk, lemon grass, and banana heart. Cook for 20 minutes or until well done. Serve with rice.

Dutch Stampot

The national dish of the Netherlands, this is one of the easiest vegetable dishes to cook, and it is amazingly flexible. I give you the most basic version, that I mostly make, but you can add any root vegetable to the mashed potatoes. Feel free to experiment with squash, leeks, onions, parsnips, cabbage, yams, and artichokes. In the Netherlands, this is served as a side dish with fried or smoked sausages but I can eat this as is any day of the week just like that.

Ingredients:

1 kilo potatoes

1/2 kilo carrots

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Extra virgin olive oil

Butter

Procedure:

Peel the potatoes and carrots. Cut them into bite-size pieces.

Cook in boiling, salted water for 25 minutes or until tender.

Drain well in a colander, put back into the pot and mash the potatoes and the carrots. Add butter and olive oil to taste. Season with salt and pepper.

Localizer:

Add a drop of virgin coconut oil to turn this European comfort food into something peculiarly Asian and palate tickling.

Soups



Soups are popular in the Philippines with the sour *sinigang* and the beef marrow soup *bulalo* being favorites served everywhere. Here are recipes for these local soups and more Western dishes. Cold soups such as *gazpacho* are always a treat on hot summer days in April and May.

Sinigang

A sour soup might sound weird to a Westerner, but trust me, this can be refreshing on a hot day. *Sinigang* is often compared to Thailand's *tom yam*. There are countless ways to make *sinigang*. I give you a basic version and leave the rest to your imagination.

Ingredients:

- 8-10 cups water
- 3 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- Handful of taro leaves
- 150 g. unripe tamarind
- 1 cup water for unripe tamarind (if not available, use 2 tbsp. tamarind paste)
- 500 g. tuna, cut into bite-size cubes
- 1 cup radish, peeled and cut into slices
- 100 g. string beans, cut into pieces.
- Salt
- Pepper

Procedure:

In a soup pot, combine water, ripe tomatoes, and taro. Boil for 4–5 minutes until tomatoes are tender.

Boil tamarind in water in a small pot until soft. Take from the stove and mash the tamarind with a spoon to extract its juice. Strain juice into a bowl. Set liquid aside and discard tamarind.

Add the tuna and radish to the soup pot and simmer until tuna is almost cooked (about 8 to 10 minutes). Stir in tamarind juice. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot with rice.

Upgrade:

Some cooks use the water that they washed the rice in which makes the soup slightly blurry. *Sinigang* is also cooked with pork, chicken, shrimp, or beef. You can also add chilli, *kangkong*, or roots.

Bulalo

Bulalo is a specialty of the cattle-raising province of Batangas. This soup made out of beef bone marrow is an example of the thrifty Filipino way of cooking where every part of an animal is used.

Ingredients:

- 1 kilo beef shank, cut *bulalo*-style
- 1 bundle *pechay*, stem base trimmed
- 100 g. cabbage, cut into wedges
- 2 potatoes, quartered
- 1 carrot, cut into wedges
- 2 onions
- 2-3 stalks spring onion
- 1 tbsp. peppercorns
- Salt

Procedure:

Wash beef shank thoroughly. Remove all traces of blood. Put in a large pot or a pressure cooker with enough water to cover the shank. Boil for 10 minutes to remove all scum. Drain and discard first boiled liquid.

Return bulalo into the pot. Add two liters of water.

Add onion, cut into cubes, and pepper. Bring to a boil and simmer for 1 1/2 to 2 hours or until beef is tender.

Add potato, carrot, and quartered onion. Cook for three minutes.

Add cabbage and *pechay*. Cook for another two minutes. Add salt to taste.

Garnish with spring onions. Serve very hot.

Sotanghon Chicken Noodle Soup

I first had this in a resort in Mindoro when I came down with a cold. It is just the right thing when you have the flu or need physical or mental strengthening. The *sotanghon* noodles can be replaced with any other kind of thin Asian noodle.

Ingredients:

2 cloves garlic, minced

2 tsp. oil

1 small onion, minced

1 carrot, chopped

1/4 cup snow peas, sliced

20 g. of dry *sotanghon* (vermicelli) noodles
2 tsp. soy sauce
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. pepper
1 green onion, sliced
1 lb. chicken
1 stalk spring onions
Handful of Shiitake mushrooms (if desired)

Procedure:

Place the chicken in a pot and cover with water.

Simmer chicken for half an hour or until tender, occasionally skimming off any foam that forms.

When the chicken is done, remove from the pot and let cool. Strain the broth and set aside. Remove chicken skin and cut meat into thin strips.

In a wok or skillet, heat the oil. Sauté the garlic and onion until soft. Add the chicken meat, and stir-fry for 30 seconds.

If you use dried Shiitake mushrooms, soften them in lukewarm water for 15 minutes before adding to the soup.

Bring everything to a boil over high heat. Stir in the carrots and snow peas. Cook for about two minutes or until the vegetables are crisp tender.

Add the *sotanghon* noodles. Season with the soy sauce, salt, and pepper. Garnish with spring onion slices.

Gazpacho Blanco

Regular *gazpacho* is a great dish on a hot day. This is the lesser-known “white” version popular in southern Spain and parts of Portugal. The combination of grapes, shallots, and garlic might seem odd at first, but trust me, it works. Grapes and yoghurt are not typical Philippine ingredients, but they are available. And this soup is so good that I just had to include it.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. seedless white grapes
- 3 cucumbers
- 1 shallot or onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 liter low fat or whole yoghurt
- Salt
- Freshly-ground white pepper

Ingredient:

Puree the grapes in a blender, then the skins and return the mush to the blender.

Add the peeled, seeded, and chopped cucumber, shallot, and garlic, and puree. Blend in the yoghurt.

Season with salt and pepper.

Refrigerate until cold. Serve with white grapes or roasted almond as a topping.

My Mom's Tomato Soup

A classic family recipe, you can make this anywhere in the world as long as you have good tomatoes. The better the tomatoes, the better the soup.

Ingredients:

1 kilo tomatoes

1 onion

Salt

Pepper

Water

Butter

1 cup of sour cream or heavy cream (optional)

Procedure:

Fry the chopped onion in a soup pot in butter until translucent.

Add 250 milliliters of water and the tomatoes.

Cook the tomatoes for about five minutes or until very soft.

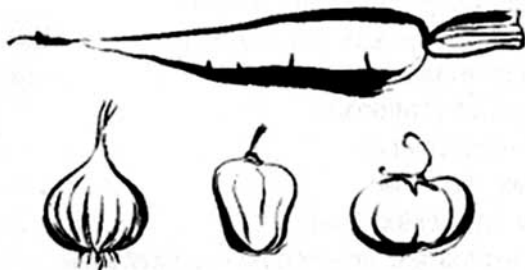
Drive through a sieve so that the tomato peels and seeds and the onion gets sifted out.

Add salt and pepper to taste. Add sour or heavy cream if desired. Serve with croutons.

Localizer:

Add lemon grass and kaffir lime leaves to the finished soup. Simmer for 10 more minutes. Take out leaves before serving.

Salads



There is not much of a tradition of fresh salads in Philippine cooking. Probably due to the time-honored motto "Cook it, peel it, or forget it," some Filipinos do not feel comfortable eating raw vegetables. This attitude is rapidly changing though. A limited selection of lettuce is available in larger supermarkets. The farmers markets often have good stuff.

However, as soon as the rainy season starts, the friendly salad vendor at the market, who used to have the best *rucola*, will not show up anymore. In the supermarkets, your choice will be limited to tired-looking Romaine. Do not despair. If you like a healthy side dish with your meals, there are many alternatives.

Oriental Garden Salad with Sesame-Soy Vinaigrette

Ingredients:

Enough lettuce for everybody
Kesong puti (optional)
Avocado (optional)
Pomelo (optional)
Green pepper (optional)
Crushed roasted, unsalted peanut (optional)
2 tbsp. white vinegar
1/2 tsp. sugar
2 tbsp. soy sauce
1/2 tsp. sesame oil
4 tbsp. olive oil

Procedure:

The twist here is to use pomelo, crushed peanuts, *kesong puti* or the "Asian" soy sauce vinaigrette. Only one of these ingredients will already turn a bland, run-of the mill salad into something special. Wash and prepare the salad as usual, then add whatever you have of the above ingredients, cut in little cubes. Sprinkle with crushed peanuts if desired. If you use *kesong puti*, you might not want to use the peanuts. Somehow they do not go together.

Pomelo Salad

This is a creative way to use pomelos that stayed too long in your fruit baskets and have become dry. The dressing will make the pomelo soft again, if you let it stand for an hour.

Ingredients:

- 1 ripe pomelo
- 2 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 4 shallots or spring onion
- 2 carrots
- 1 tsp foesle mint leaves
- 2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
- 1 tbsp. roasted, unsalted peanuts
- 1 tbsp. palm sugar or light brown sugar
- Juice of 3 or 4 *calamansi*
- 1/2 tsp. white vinegar

Procedure:

Peel and dismember the pomelo. Make sure that you also remove the skin of the individual wedges. Put in a bowl, and add julienned carrots, the finely sliced shallots or spring onions, and the mint leaves.

In another bowl, mix sugar, *calamansi* juice, vinegar, and crushed garlic. Mix until sugar dissolves. Pour over the salad.

Sprinkle with slightly crushed, roasted peanuts. Serve on some lettuce leaves.

Tomato-Avocado Salad

Ingredients:

1/2 kilo grape tomatoes
2 ripe, soft avocados, diced
1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 3 or 4 *calamansi*
Sea salt

Procedure:

Briefly blanch the tomatoes in cooking salt water. Take out and set aside until cool, then peel and quarter. You can remove the seeds, too.

Peel and dice the avocados. Put them in a bowl with the tomatoes.

Mix olive oil and *calamansi* juice and pour over the salad. Sprinkle with sea salt and toss. Be careful when tossing so the ripe avocado does not turn into mush. Keep refrigerated for one hour before serving.

Green Papaya Salad (Atchara)

Technically, *atchara* is not a salad but rather a pickled unripe papaya. It is a popular side dish with barbecue, *adobo*, fried fish, et al.

Ingredients:

- 1 green (unripe) papaya
- 1 carrot
- 1 onion
- 1 piece ginger, thumb-sized
- 200 milliliters strong white vinegar
- 200 g. white sugar
- 1 tbsp. salt
- 1/2 tbsp. powdered black pepper

Procedure:

Cut the papaya in half and scoop out the seeds with a spoon. (The papaya needs to be unripe and firm for this recipe. Once it starts to show yellowish patches, it is not usable anymore.)

Shred the papaya using a vegetable grater. Sprinkle with salt. Toss well. Let stand for half an hour, then squeeze out the juices.

Peel and cut the carrot into slices. Cut the onion into very fine strips.

Peel the ginger and grate it finely. Toss together with the papaya, onion, and carrot.

Mix together vinegar, sugar, and salt. Bring mixture to a boil, and wait until sugar and salt are completely dissolved. Cool. Pour over the papaya and vegetables. Add the pepper. Toss well. Let stand overnight in the fridge.

Cabbage Salad

Ingredients:

300 g. cabbage
1 carrots
1 small cucumber (optional)
Juice of 2 or 3 *calamansi*
Pinch of sugar
Pinch of salt
Ground pepper
1/2 tbsp. white or red vinegar
1/2 tbsp. vegetable oil

Procedure:

Finely slice the cabbage, julienne the carrot, and put together in a bowl. Add sliced cucumber, if desired.

Pour dressing of *calamansi* juice, vinegar, vegetable oil, sugar, and salt over the vegetables. Add pepper to taste.

Tomato Salad

Finally, here's a salad, that one can make with ingredients available in any market. Just slice some tomatoes and a red onion. Add a dressing out of red vinegar, Italian balsamico vinegar, olive oil, salt, and pepper that's it.

Rice



Many Filipinos eat rice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It makes sense to adapt to this diet to some extent as rice is not only fairly cheap but also very nutritious. To add variety to your diet, eat the organic brown or red rice. Here are some ideas to make rice more appealing and varied.

Coco Rice

Ingredients:

2 cups rice
Milk of one ripe coconut

Procedure:

If you have a rice cooker, cook the rice with coconut milk instead of water. If you prefer the stove top method, use the same liquid-to-rice ratio that you normally do. Just substitute the coconut milk for part of the water.

Garlic-fried Rice

Ingredients:

2 cups of cooked rice
4 tbsp. thinly sliced garlic
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 egg
1/8 tsp. salt
Sliced tomatoes and sliced cucumber (optional)

Procedure:

Heat the oil. Add in the garlic.

Fry until golden. Add in the rice and fry for two minutes.

Leave a hole in the middle and beat the egg to it.

Cover the egg with rice. Stir after 30 seconds. Mix well until the egg coats almost all the rice.

Add sliced tomatoes and cucumber, if desired.

Shanghai-fried Rice**Ingredients:**

3 stalks spring onion

1 small can of corn

100 g. ham or Chinese sausage

2 carrots

Soy sauce

Vegetable oil

Procedure:

Prepare the garlic fried rice as described earlier. Set aside.

Saute the carrots, corn, and the ham/sausages in a teaspoon of vegetable oil.

Add garlic fried rice. Season with soy sauce.

Serve garnished with spring onions.

Malaysian Nasi Minyak

Ingredients:

- 500 g. Basmati rice
- 20 g. turmeric roots, fresh and ground
- 2 large onions
- 5 cloves of garlic crushed lightly
- 2 pcs. star anise
- 1 pc. cinnamon stick
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsps. corn oil
- 30 g. cashew nuts or peanuts
- 30 g. raisins
- 1 or 2 stalks spring onion

Procedure:

Wash Basmati rice thoroughly.

In a saucepan, fry ground turmeric, cloves, and cinnamon stick in corn oil. Take out spices.

Add rice and stir until well coated. Pour in water till it is about two centimeters above the rice and simmer over medium heat for 10 minutes. Turn the fire down to low. Simmer for 10 more minutes. Or transfer to a rice cooker.

Serve garnished with fried cashew nuts or peanuts, raisins, and fried spring onions.

Desserts, Cakes, Bread, Jams, Spreads; Drinks, and Cocktails



Bread is a problem almost everywhere in the world if you are from Germany and used to the countless varieties of dark bread that are available there. If I do not have dark bread in the kitchen, I feel like a Filipino who has no rice at home—starvation is just around the corner! When we moved to the Philippines, I used to buy expensive dark breads in the Euro speciality stores or at the Shangri-la Makati where an Austrian pastry chef is responsible for

good whole wheat bread. You will often get decent brown bread in the parts of the Philippines where expats from Germany, Switzerland, or Austria are trying to finance their stay in the country by opening a restaurant. As getting fresh dark bread was turning into a logistical nightmare, I ended up making my own bread. I include a recipe for super-easy bread.

Many baking ingredients like almonds or walnuts are expensive. Due to the humid climate, breads or cakes will often not rise or become spongy. It helps to add a dash of baking soda (not baking powder) to your dough.

Yeast and baking powder might turn weird in the pantry. I spent many hours trying to make those delicious German cakes I grew up with just to see them turn into wet mush that nobody wanted to eat. So I have included only one cake recipe that is sure to work as it does not involve any baking at all.

If you have a craving for sweets, stick to the desserts in this chapter or familiarize yourself with the many wonderful rice cakes that are sold in the markets or in little stalls in the malls.

Finally, there are a couple of recipes for drinks, non-alcoholic and alcoholic, to top things off.

DESSERTS

Mango Float

Ingredients:

12–16 *broas* (local ladyfinger-like sponge biscuits)
500 g. cream
600 g. *condensada* (sweetened condensed milk)
3–4 ripe mangoes

Procedure:

Line the bottom of an 8x8-inch dish with the *broas*.

In a large bowl mix the cream and *condensada*. Spread half of the mixture over the *broas*. Let rest for an hour or two.

Peel the mangoes that should not be overtly ripe. A slight sourness in the fruits makes this dessert more interesting. Cut the fruit meat in slices. Put them on top of the cream/*condensada*-mixture in your dish. Spread the rest of the mixture over it. Cover and let it stay in the freezer for one or two hours. Serve half-frozen.

Mango Pudding

Ingredients:

3 ripe mangoes
1 1/2 tbsp. gelatine
250 ml. water
200 g. sugar
150 ml. cream
Vanilla essence (optional)

Procedure:

Puree the mango flesh in a blender.

Dissolve gelatin in some lukewarm water. Boil the rest of the water, add gelatin and stir until the gelatin has completely dissolved. Add to the mango puree in the blender.

Mix cream, sugar, and vanilla essence in a bowl and add to the mix in the blender. Blend again briefly.

Pour into a bowl and chill until firm. Serve with whipped cream.

Tropical Applesauce

Ingredients:

1 or 2 kilo apples (Fuji, Gravenstein, Macintosh or any other good cooking apple. Do not use Granny Smiths.)

Calamansi

Sugar to taste

Procedure:

Peel, core, and quarter the apples and cook in half or one cup of water, depending if you use one or two kilos of apples, for 15 minutes. Add the juice of one or two *calamansi* to the water so the apples won't get brown.

Let apples cool. Puree them in a blender. If the apples are good, you do not need to do anything else.

Otherwise, add more *calamansi* juice, a tablespoon of sugar, maybe a pinch of ground cinnamon or nutmeg.

Leave in the fridge for an hour or two. Eat just like that or with whipped cream as a dessert. Try it on white bread for breakfast.

Localizer:

The recipe is the orthodox German way to make applesauce. However, since you are in the tropics, add local fruits and elevate your applesauce to gourmet status. This applesauce is absolutely fabulous when you include one ripe and uncooked mango while pureeing the cooked apples. You can also experiment with a handful of sweet Baguio strawberries or fresh pineapples.

Filipino Rice Porridge (Champorado)

This is not a dessert but is usually eaten for breakfast or *merienda*. It is a children's favorite. There is a perfectly edible, instant version available in every supermarket, but if you want to do it all by yourself, here is how. I replaced water that is commonly used to cook the rice with milk.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup glutinous rice
- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1/4 cup sugar
- Condensed milk

Procedure:

Cook rice in a sauce pan with milk. Stir constantly. Do not use a rice cooker!

When rice is ready, add cocoa and sugar. Serve in bowls with swirls of sweet condensed milk on top.

Upgrade:

Use carabao milk instead of regular milk. You may also try coconut milk for amazing results.

Leche Flan

Ingredients:

400 g. white sugar
One can of evaporated milk
4 eggs
1 pinch *calamansi* zest

Procedure:

Caramelize 100 grams of sugar in a pan and pour into a 15 x 10 centimeter *llanera* (the oval tin pans

available in every supermarket and household store).
Let the sugar cool completely.

Combine the milk, *calamansi* zest, and the rest of the sugar in a bowl. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Add eggs and stir until well blended. Pour mixture through a strainer into the *llanera*.

Place the *llanera* in a large pot. Fill the pot with water, until it reaches half way below the rim.

Steam-bake for 30 minutes or until flan is set. Take the *llanera* out of the water. Let it cool out completely.

Loosen flan with a knife. Put a platter on top of the *llanera* and turn around so the flan and the caramelized sugar can slide out. Remove the pan.

Serve chilled.

Upgrade:

Replace *calamansi* zest with pandan extract.

CAKES, COOKIES, AND JAMS

Calamansi Pie

A cake that doesn't need to be baked is perfect for the climate of the Philippines

Ingredients:

Two small packs Skyflakes or Graham crackers
3 tbsp. sugar
50 g. butter
1 tbsp. of gelatin
Water
250 milliliters cream
1 pack cream cheese
300 milliliters condensed milk
Juice of 3 or 4 *calamansi*
Green food coloring (optional)

Procedure:

Crush the crackers in a clean plastic bag.

Melt butter in a pan, add sugar and the crushed crackers. Stir.

Pour the mixture in a 23-cm springform pan and put in the freezer to cool down.

Soften the cream cheese with a fork. Put cream, condensed milk, and softened cream cheese in a blender. Blend until smooth.

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Add to the mixture in the blender and blend again. Add a drop of green food coloring for drama.

Pour the mixture into the springform pan. Return to the freezer until set, at least for four hours.

Cassava Cake

I can't believe this cake has no flour! The starch of the cassava gives the cake a consistency that is surprisingly similar to some Western cakes, yet it is completely unique.

Ingredients:

3 large freshly grated *cassavas*

200 g. cup sugar

Milk of one mature coconut milk

100 g. butter

200 ml. evaporated milk
100 ml. condensed milk

Procedure:

Melt butter and mix with sugar. Add the cassava and coconut milk, and stir.

Bake for 30 minutes in the oven at 200°C.

Pour the evaporated milk over the cassava cake until it gets absorbed. Top off with a generous shot of condensed milk. Put in the oven and brown the topping. Let cool before serving.

Coconut Macaroons

This recipe is from my mom who was never able to use freshly grated coconut in Germany and never knew how wonderful genuine coconut macaroons can taste.

Ingredients:

Grated flesh of one ripe coconut
4 large egg whites
150 g. white sugar

1 pinch cream of tartar
1 pinch salt
Hostia wafers, if available

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 180°C.

Whip egg whites and salt until they become white and stiff. Add sugar in three parts. Continue to whip until the egg whites are very stiff.

Use a rubber spatula to fold in grated coconut flesh.

If you are able to find *hostias*, place them in neat rows on a baking tray. Otherwise, just cover the backing tray with aluminium foil.

Drop the mixture by the teaspoon on the *hostias* or on the aluminium foil.

Dry rather than bake the macaroons on the baking tray in the oven for 15–20 minutes. Some people leave the oven open for that. The outside should be light brown, but the insides should still be moist.

Pan San Nicholas

To make real Pan San Nicolas, you need the proper molds carved with the likeness of St. Nicholas. They are impossible to find if you do not live in Pampanga, where this recipe is from. Using a plain cookie cutter is the next best thing. This recipe uses much cornstarch. After trying it out, I understood that the purpose of the cornstarch is to absorb the tropical humidity. The cookies get soft after a couple of days and last very long despite the climate.

Ingredients:

- 1 ripe coconut
- 3 tbsp. butter
- 250 g. sugar
- 4 egg yolks (use the leftovers from the macaroons)
- 300 g. all-purpose flour
- 300 g. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- Some anise seeds
- 50 milliliters evaporated milk or regular milk

Procedure:

Grate coconut meat. Extract cream.

Soften butter in a bowl. Gradually add sugar. Beat egg yolks in another bowl. Add to the butter-sugar mixture.

Sift the flour with the baking powder and cornstarch. Add crushed anise seeds.

Add half of the seeds to the butter-egg-sugar mixture. Stir and add coconut milk. Add the rest of the flour, cornstarch, and baking powder.

Spread the dough on a table top. Knead with a rolling pin, until it is approximately one centimetre thick. Cut out cookies with a cookie cutter and brush with milk.

Place on a baking tray covered with aluminium foil.

Put in an oven that has been preheated to 180°C.

Bake for 15 minutes. The cookies should still be milky white when done.

Mango Jam

Ingredients:

1 kilo mangoes
1 tbsp. gelatin
200 g. sugar
1 tbsp. corn starch
1 tbsp. vanilla

Procedure:

Blend the flesh of the mangoes in a blender. Put in a pan over medium heat. Gradually add all the other ingredients. Dissolve the gelatin and cornstarch in water.

Once everything has been blended properly, fill into clean jars. This jam has to be stored in the fridge.

Mangosteen Jam a la Marketman

This might well be the most expensive jam you have ever made since mangosteens are costly even when they are in season. You need fresh, top-quality mangosteen for this jam. This recipe comes from the blog “Marketmanila.”

Ingredients:

6 kilo mangosteens

1 kilo sugar

Procedure:

Peel the mangosteens.

Place pulp, including seeds, in a large bowl. Add the sugar. Cover with cling-wrap or foil to ward off ants. Let it sit for two hours.

After the fruit and sugar have turned into mush, put into an enamelled pot and cook for an hour over slow heat. Stir occasionally.

The seeds should have turned very soft by now. If you do not want any trace of the seeds left at all, pour the jam into a blender while still hot, and blend.

Fill into clean jars. Let cool. Store in the fridge.

BREAD AND SPREADS

The Incredible No-Knead Bread

Developed by baker Jim Lahey of New York, this recipe quickly made the rounds in food blogs and the like after it was first published in *The New York Times* in 2006. This is “molecular cuisine” in action. Even though it might not be something that Ferran Adrià will serve, it will help you have decent bread any day of the week. If you want white bread, use all-purpose flour. Or try the many rye or whole-wheat flour varieties available at shops such as Sànti’s or Healthy Options.

Ingredient:

- 3 cups all-purpose or whole wheat bread flour, more for dusting
- 1/4 tsp. instant yeast
- 1 1/4 tsp. salt
- Cornmeal or wheat bran as needed.

Procedure:

In a large bowl combine flour, yeast, and salt. Add 1 2/4 cups water. Stir briefly until you get a shaggy, sticky sludge. No need to knead. Just cover the bowl

with plastic wrap. Let the mixture rest overnight. It should sit for at least 12, better yet, 18 hours in a warm corner. Letting the dough sit for a long time is essential as it allows the gluten to form solid networks. (I do not actually know what that means, but that is the scientific explanation for why you do not need to knead this dough.)

The dough is ready when its surface is dotted with bubbles. Lightly flour work surface. Place dough on it, and flatten it slightly. Fold it over on itself twice like a letter envelope.

Put dough seam side down on a towel. Dust with flour. Cover with another cotton towel. Let rise for about two hours.

Preheat the oven to 250°C. Put a 6- to 8-quart heavy covered pot (cast iron, enamel, Pyrex, or ceramic) in the oven as it heats. This is very important: The pot needs to be solid metal and very hot. Put the dough in the very hot glass or ceramic pot, seam side up. Cover with a lid. Bake for 30 minutes, then remove lid. Bake for another 15–30 minutes. Take out and cool on a rack.

Guacamole Spread

Ingredients:

1 ripe and very soft avocado
2 cloves garlic
Juice of 2 *calamansi*
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 tomato
Some fresh basil sprigs
Salt
Pepper

Procedure:

Place the meat of one avocado, olive oil, *calamansi* juice, salt, pepper, basil and crushed garlic in the blender. Blend until smooth

Cut the tomato in cubes. Add to the mixture in the blender. Process very briefly. The tomato cubes should not get mashed up completely.

Enjoy on your no-knead bread, toast, or as a salsa.

Upgrade:

Try to replace the avocado with eggplant. Grill the eggplant on the gas oven as described in the recipe for *torta* or boil in hot water until soft. Peel and use like the avocado in this recipe.

Kesong Puti Spread

200 g. *kesong puti*
Extra virgin coconut oil
1/2 tsp. fresh herbs
Rock salt

Procedure:

Cut the *kesong puti* into medium pieces.

Add salt and fresh herbs (I typically use some basil, thyme, and oregano)

Put in blender, add a small amount of olive oil, and blitz a couple of times until all is mixed.

NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Buko Juice

Ingredients:

1 young coconut
Sugar (optional)

Procedure:

Open the coconut and pour the coco water in a jar. Remove the flesh with a coconut scraper that is available in most supermarkets. Add sugar to taste, if you like. Serve cold. If you buy buco juice from a vendor, make sure that they make it freshly for you and they do not add too much sugar.

Melon Juice

Ingredients:

1 melon (cantaloupe or honey dew)
Sugar to taste
Water
Calamansi

Procedure:

Take a juicy, ripe melon. Slice it in half. Remove seeds, use a melon scraper to cut the flesh into long strips. Put melon strips in a pitcher. Add half a liter of water and sugar to taste. Add the juice of a few *calamansi*, if you like. Let sit for a couple of hours, then serve with lots of ice cubes in glasses with spoons. This is a favorite at kiddy parties.

Santol Juice**Ingredients:**

1 kilo santol fruits
Water
Brown sugar (optional)

Procedure:

Peel and quarter the santol. Put them in a large pitcher. Pour water to cover the fruit. Place in the fridge for a couple of hours. Add sugar, if needed, and serve with ice cubes.

Once the juice is gone, just add water for a second serving.

Salabat

Ingredients:

Fresh ginger
Water

Procedure:

This ginger brew is popular during the “cold” days in December and January. It also serves as a remedy for colds and flu. Peel and chop a good piece of fresh ginger. Boil in a liter of water for 15 minutes. Some folks add orange or apple slices. Drink hot with a spoonful of honey.

Pandan Water

Ingredients:

Pandan leaves
Water

Procedure:

This is an easy way to make your table water more fancy by adding the elegant flavor of the *pandan* leaf. Boil a handful of pandan leaves for 10 minutes in cooking water. You'll end up with muddy, green water. Let cool. Filter if you want, and add a dash or two to a liter of cold water. Adding artificial *pandan* flavor (available in supermarkets) to water will not work.

Dalandan-Buko Juice

Ingredients:

2 kilos sweet *dalandan*
Meat of one young coconut
Sugar (depending on how sweet the *dalandan* are)

Procedure:

Squeeze the *dalandan*. Put the juice in a jar. Add the grated meat of the coconut and sugar to taste.

Avocado Shake

Ingredients:

2 ripe avocados
100 milliliters of evaporated milk
Sugar or syrup
Ice cubes
Chocolate syrup (optional)

Procedure:

Put the meat of the avocados, the milk, and ice cubes in a blender. Blend until smooth. Add sugar or syrup to taste. Pour into glasses. Top with chocolate syrup, if you like. This drink is so rich that you can even serve it as dessert. Variations of this shake are popular all over Southeast Asia.

COCKTAILS

Manila Sling

Ingredients:

- 2 parts brown rum
- 1 part *calamansi* juice
- 2 parts sugar syrup or 1 tbsp. fine sugar completely dissolved in 2 cl. Water

Procedure:

In a shaker half-filled with ice cubes, combine the rum, *calamansi* juice and sugar. Shake well. Strain into a glass with plenty of ice cubes. Garnish with a maraschino cherry, if you're feeling fanciful.

Calamansi Ale

Ingredients:

- 1 can ginger ale
- 1 or 2 shots brown rum
- 1 shot *calamansi* juice

Procedure:

Just squeeze some *calamansi*. Add the ginger ale and one or two shots of rum, depending on the buzz you want to achieve. Serve over ice.

Dayap Mojito**Ingredients:**

1 parts white rum
2 parts club soda
12 mint leaves
1 part *dayap* juice
1 tbsp. sugar

Procedure:

Place mint leaves, sugar, and *dayap* juice in a glass. Crush well with a spoon or pestle. Add rum. Top off with club soda and ice cubes. Stir well. Garnish with springs of mint and a *dayap* wheel.

Powderless “Powder Juice”

“Powder juice” drinks in the Philippines are usually fruit drinks from instant powder mixed with gin. They’re not exactly my taste, but you can do the same with fresh juice from fruits. Combine a small can of unsweetened pineapple juice with one or two shots of gin and serve over ice cubes. When pomelos are in season, try gin with freshly squeezed pomelo juice and some ice cubes. It doesn’t get much better than that!

Generoso Fuji

Ingredients:

1 shot Generoso brandy
1 can Coke

Procedure:

“Fuji” is a “lady’s drink” that is popular in my hometown Berlin. It is basically brandy with Coke and ice cubes. The nutty flavour of Generoso works well with Coke. Add a nice twist with the juice of one or two *calamansi*.

Don't Try This at Home



Many Filipino specialties require long preparations, difficult, even dangerous, cooking methods or specialized equipment. There are a lot of dishes I would rather not make at home, but have others prepare for me. Here is a short list of some dishes you might want to have other do for you. Street vendors and food shops sell many of these dishes.

Bibingka

The Filipino rice cake is baked in a special clay pot with live coals on top and underneath. This shaky construction would set off alarm bells at Departments of Work Safety in many countries, and I certainly would not want to have one at home. If you like *bibingka*, get it at the many stalls found in markets and food courts.

Brazo de Mercedes

A dessert similar to a jelly roll, it is made from a sheet of meringue rolled around a custard filling. We tried several times to do this at home, and it was a disaster each time so I eventually gave up. There is decent *Brazo de Mercedes* at good bakeries, so you do not need to go to all this trouble.

Churros

A deep-fried dough pastry snack, this is typically dipped in warm chocolate sauce. Originally from Spain, *churros* are popular in former Spanish colonies in Latin America, the Caribbean, and in the Philippines. Apparently originally a snack of Spanish shepherds, it is a huge mess to make at home because the *churros* need to be fried in lots of hot cooking oil. I have my *suki* at the Lung Center market in Diliman, Quezon City. He tirelessly improves on his chocolate sauce. No Sunday is complete without a box of his *churros*. The restaurant chain Dulcinea also has very good *churros*.

Halo-Halo

Made with shaved ice, milk, and sugar, this parfait has variations all over Southeast Asia: Indonesia has the *cendol*, Malaysia and Singapore the *ais kacang*. Typical ingredients of the *halo-halo* include coconut, purple yam, flan, preserved plantains, jackfruit, red beans, corn, and others. It took me three years to discover what a delicious and refreshing dessert *halo-halo* is. The secret is to scoop and scoop and scoop (*halo-halo* means “mix mix”). Once the shaved ice starts to melt, every spoonful will taste different. Ask the vendor if he uses purified water, or stick with the *halo-halo* available at the fast-food chain Chowking which is very good.

Hopia

This pastry is a kind of tiny Chinese mooncake. It is filled with sweet bean paste and sold all over Binondo, Manila, and in other stores that cater to Chinese-Filipinos.

Lechon

This is a whole roasted suckling pig grilled on a spit over charcoals. The process can take many hours. The pig has to be turned constantly while the skin gets wiped with water and pig fat. There is no need to do this by yourself as excellent *lechon*-style pork is sold for reasonable prices around town.

Puto Bumbong

Puto and other rice cakes are sold at every street corner so you do not need to learn how to make your own unless you plan on coming up with your personal variation on this popular snack. I mention *puto bumbong* because it is my favorite among the rice cakes. At the same time it is among the hardest to make. It is made out of a special variety of sticky or glutinous riced called *pirurutong*, which is deep purple. To make *puto bumbong* you need a unique steamer that looks like a kettle with two or three spouts. The soaked rice gets cooked over boiling water in bamboo tubes, which are pushed into the spouts. The whole thing is served with grated coconut, butter, and brown sugar. There is ample opportunity to burn your fingers in the cooking process. That is one reason you should try patronize your friendly street vendor or try the delicacy at restaurants like *Via Mare* or *Aristocrat*. *Puto bumbong* is often sold during *simbang gabi*, the mass celebrated at dawn nine consecutive days before Christmas.

Sans Rival

How a cake that needs to be stored in the fridge became a staple in a tropical country is another mystery of Philippine cuisine. To make the meringue is already a feat. Coming up with the fluffy French butter cream is another challenge so better leave all that work to the pros at the bakeries and cafes that sell this wonderful cake. Even Starbucks carries it.

Siomai and Siopao

I am sure you can make these steamed rice-flour buns of Chinese origin at home, but why bother as they are virtually available at every street corner, even in 7/11 stores?

Sisig

This dish made of chopped pig snouts, tails, and ears is on my list of Filipino gross-out foods. According to popular food history, it originated from Angeles City where locals bought unused pig heads cheaply from the American Clark Air Base. It became so popular that today there is a SoMa and NoMa version, meaning, versions from South and North of Manila. *Sisig* must be among the most time-consuming dishes to make. Many recipes require the pig's meat to be barbecued, boiled, and fried. There are other variations of this dish that I find mouth-watering. Chicken sisig is nice, but my favorite Filipino comfort food is tuna sisig. I find it hard to imagine a life without it once I have to leave the Philippines for good. Tuna sisig with fried rice and a cold San Miguel beer in the evening in an *ihaw-ihaw* joint, and life is good.

Sorbetes

The ice cream vendor with his colorful cart is a popular sight in the Philippines. It graces many postcards and tourist posters. *Mamang sorbetero* used to sell homemade ice cream made out of coconut or *carabao*

milk, but today his cart is more likely to contain buckets of brand-name ice cream. As with all street food in the Philippines, be careful. This stuff is called “dirty ice cream” for a reason.

Taho

This comfort food is a warm snack made of soft bean curd, drizzled with dark caramel syrup and tapioca pearls. The *magtatabo* (taho vendor), who carries two aluminium buckets with the *taho* and the other ingredients on a yoke over his shoulders, is a beloved piece of Filipiniana. *Taho* is not only cheap (around five peso a cup), but for a sweet snack, it is healthy as the tofu is rich in proteins and calcium.

Tinapa

Tinapa is the Filipino term for smoked fish. It goes through a laborious process. The best fish for this is milkfish. Smoking food is not a common type of food preservation in the Philippines, but the results are strikingly similar to British smoked kippers or German Bückling.

Turon

Turon are sweetened plantains and jackfruit deep-fried in an eggroll wrapper, sprinkled with sugar. Like *churros* and other food that needs to be fried in a lot of hot cooking oil, I prefer to have others make *turon* for me.

All About Ingredients



FRUITS

Avocado (Abukado)

The avocados in the Philippines are not as aromatic as the Mediterranean varieties, yet they are perfectly suitable for salads, guacamole, and dressings. They also make a killer fruit shake with some evaporated milk. And there is the very creamy avocado ice cream.

Breadfruit (Rimas)

These gigantic fruits are a staple all over Southeast Asia. They are roasted, baked, fried, or boiled, and taste a bit like potato.

Banana (Saging)

The local bananas are like the local mangoes: Once you taste them, you will never want to go back to the unripe, flavorless bananas that they sell in your home country. An interesting variety is the plantain or cooking banana (*saba* in Tagalog), which we sometimes have fried for breakfast, as a snack, or with *Arroz al a Cubana*. Banana heart (*puso ng saging*) is certainly something to look at: deep purplish and crimson in color and shaped like a heart, this is the flower of the banana tree and will develop into a stalk of banana when left on the tree. It can be fried or cooked in coconut milk. It is an ingredient of *kare-kare*.

Calamansi

I have expounded on the merits of this citrus fruit elsewhere. Just try it. You'll like it.

Custard Apple (Atis)

The *atis* is a weird fruit that looks a bit like an artichoke. The flesh is very white and sweet, but unfortunately full of little black seeds so it is a bit cumbersome to eat.

Dalandan

This native orange is often on the sour side, but if you squeeze the juice and mix it with some orange juice, it makes for a nice drink.

Dayap

Dayap, the local lime, is hard to find, but if you get it, give it a try. I prefer its fresh, clean taste to that of other limes. It is great for cocktails like mojito.

Durian

The durian is one of the most notorious fruits of the tropics. While its smell makes some people want to throw up, others swear by its taste. "Tastes like heaven and smells like hell" as the common adages goes. Some airlines and hotels explicitly ban the fruit because of its stink. You should try it just once.

Duhat

This fruit, which looks like a dark cherry, is rich in Vitamins A and C. It colors the tongue purple. It is used to make a fruit wine or vinegar in some parts of the Philippines.

Guava

Another tropical fruit, that is very popular, but I never made friends with it. I love its fresh, rose-like smell, but did not learn to like its taste which can be compared with young apples or pears.

Jackfruit (Langka)

The jackfruit is easily confused with the breadfruit. Like the breadfruit, it is an acquired taste. The flesh is wobbly, white, and bleeds a milky, sticky sap. It is popular in the Philippines when cooked in coconut milk.

Kamias

The *kamias* looks like an unripe, green starfruit. It is very sour, and generally not eaten raw. It is often used as a souring agent for *sinigang* soup. Some people manage to make a very nice jam out of it. You can also use it to remove rust and stains from knives and hands.

Lanzones

To think that such a dull-looking fruit can taste so good! Once you peel off the spotty, brownish skin, you find five white segments with little seeds. The taste is a lovely combination of sweet and acidic. A great, if slightly messy, dessert.

Lychee (Licheas)

While the lychee is a native of southern China, you will find it in the Philippines when in season. Since it is often flown in from China, it can be bit pricey. Like *lanzones*, it is mostly eaten fresh.

Mango (Manggang Kalabaw, Mangga ng Piko)

Filipinos like to claim that their mangoes are the sweetest in the world, and they are right. I never liked mangoes in Germany, but that was because we only get unripe stuff from God knows where. There are many ways to eat mangoes, but the best way is to just rip off the skin with your hands and munch on it with the juice dripping down your chin. Green, unripe mangos can also be nice. Filipinos eat them dipped in salt or *bagoong* (fish paste). The green mango shake that is available in many restaurants and juice bars is refreshing and should not be missed.

Mangosteen

The mangosteen is probably the most awesome fruit on the globe. A skin that resembles balsa wood (and leaves nasty, hard-to-remove stains under the fingernails) encloses five segments of the most exquisite, juicy white flesh which tastes like nothing you have ever eaten before. Supposedly, Queen Victoria promised instant knighthood to anybody who could deliver this fruit to her in merry old England. That position is still up for grabs because the mangosteen spoils so quickly that you will have a hard time finding it in New York, Paris, Sydney, or Berlin! So eat as much of it as you can while in the Philippines.

Melon

Watermelons, honeydew melons, and cantaloupes are widely available in the Philippines. Even though they do not compare to the Mediterranean ones that I used to buy in Germany, they are still scrumptious.

Papaya

Like the mango, the local papaya is eaten both unripe and ripe. The ripe fruit is a treat with a dash of *calamansi* juice. Green papayas are pickled in the Philippines for the popular side dish *atchara*.

Pineapple (Piña)

This is another tropical delight that leaves the pineapples that you get in the supermarket back home in the dust. The fruit is ready to eat when the leaves sprouting from the top come off easily. If you are too lazy to peel the fruit, buy the cheap, unsweetened pineapple juice in cans for your daily fix of Vitamins A and C.

Pomelo

Pomelos resemble pink grapefruits, but what a difference in terms of taste! When pomelos are in season, they are sold everywhere. To eat them on a hot afternoon can be one of the most intense sensual experiences you can ever have. Older pomelos can be a bit dry and tasteless, but you can use them in salads. The juice also make for great cocktails.

Rambutan

The name comes from the Malay word for hair, *rambut*. And hairy they are with their red whiskers. Once you peel the skin off, you'll find an oval of white flesh that resembles a lychee. Rambutan belongs to the same family. It is rich in Vitamin C and just so good.

Santol

When this homely-looking, brownish fruit is in season, street vendors sell them peeled and sprinkled with salt. It tastes great and refreshing. Suck the pulp from the seeds, but be careful not to swallow them. Santol also makes a good juice.

Soursop (Guayabano)

The name soursop comes from the Dutch *zuur zak*, or sour sack, a very fitting description. It is rarely eaten raw but is mostly used for desserts and juice.

Tamarind (Sampaloc)

Unripe tamarinds are used as souring agent in *sinigang* soup. The ripe fruit resembles a date. The best are the ones from Thailand that are sold in boxes all yearlong. Peel off the firm skin and suck the pulp from the seeds—wow!

VEGETABLES

Beansprouts (Toge)

The sprouts of soy beans and mungo beans are widely available although they are often sold in plastic bags where they quickly turn mushy. They can be sautéed, stir fried, or added to vegetable stews and dishes such as *pad thai* and Indonesian *gado-gado*.

Cabbage

Cabbage is available in many varieties all over the Philippines: celery, *pechay*, mustard cabbage, and Chinese cabbage. They are used in soups or salads.

Cassava (Kamoteng Kahoy)

Also known as *manio*k or *yuca*, *cassava* is the third largest source of carbohydrates for human food in the world. Africa is its largest center of production. In the Philippines it is a staple food, and is also used for the delicious *cassava* cake and other desserts.

Corn (Mais)

Sweet corn is a popular snack. It is sold cooked and basted with margarine by many street vendors. Surprisingly, corn is also used in desserts such as the delicious *maja blanca*.

Eggplants (Talong)

The local eggplants are long and slender, not round like the European aubergine. Its skin is a bit hard and its flesh less aromatic, but they are cheap. It is used in a lot of traditional Philippine dishes such as *kare-kare*. Aubergine-style eggplants for *melanzane* are often available. Then there are small, short eggplants, that often are not purple but white or green. Those are more aromatic and make for good salads.

Ginger (Luya)

Ginger is one of the most important ingredients in Southeast Asia cooking. You should always have some at home as countless recipes call for it. It is also said to combat indigestion and colds. Ginger tea or *salabat* is a remedy against all kinds of coughs and sneezes.

Gourd

There are many kinds of gourds, and they are among the cheapest vegetables: angled gourd (*patola*), bottle gourd (*upo*), Snake gourd (*papukis*), winter gourd (*kondol*), and the bitter gourd (*ampalaya*). The last is an important ingredient of the popular Ilocano dish *pinakbet*. The gourd is such a common and versatile vegetable that even the *kattokong*, the traditional Filipino hat, is made out of *upo*.

Pumpkin (Kalabasa)

Slices of *kalabasa* are sold at markets and supermarkets all year round. These can be used for delicious pumpkin soups or cooked in coconut milk. In other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, there are even desserts made out of pumpkin.

Onions

There are many varieties of onions in the Philippines: white, yellow, or brown “Spanish” onions. The red onions are my favorite. The real deal, however, are the little local shallots.

Shallots (Sibuyas Tagalog)

The small shallots are often available in beautifully bound bundles. They might be more time-consuming to peel than regular onions, but their distinct aroma is worth the extra work.

Shiitake Mushrooms (Kabuteng Kahoy)

Even though not native to the Philippines, the Chinese *shiitake* mushroom with their rich, meat-like flavor are often sold in markets. They can be grilled, fried, braised, or turned into European-style mushroom soup. You can also find wood ears, portobellos, oyster, straw, and other mushrooms.

Snow Peas (Sitsaro)

Snow peas are ubiquitous, and so are the slightly sweet sugar peas that are a staple in Chinese cooking. Both need to have their strings pulled out. They can be boiled or sautéed as whole. Western-style pea pods are only available in cans or frozen.

String Beans (Sitaw)

This must be the longest vegetable in the whole world. The famous Baguio string beans can be up to three meters long and look like they should be worn as a shawl on cold days. They are cheap, make for good vegetable stews, and are found in such dishes as *kare-kare*.

Sweet potatoes (Kamote)

These root tubers are filling and rich in carbohydrates. They can be eaten boiled or cooked in coconut milk. There are also a number of desserts based on *kamote* such as *guinataan*.

Taro (Gabi)

In ancient Rome, the taro root was what the potato is in Western food today: a staple food. While it is not used in European cooking anymore, both the roots and the leaves are an important ingredient in Southeast Asian cooking. In the Philippines, the leaves are used for the vegetable dish *laing* and the sour soup *sinigang*. In its raw form the plant

is toxic, although the toxin is destroyed by cooking or by steeping *taro* roots in cold water overnight.

Tomatoes

The tomatoes available in the Philippines do not look like much, and often arrive at the market half-yellow or even green. They are not breathtakingly tasty when eaten raw, but once you start to use them for cooking, they are great. Plain tomato sauce and tomato soup are a delight with these aromatic tomatoes.

Ube

With its purple flesh, this yam must be one of the oddest-looking vegetables there is. It colors desserts such as *halo-halo* or *ube halaya*.

Yam (Singkamas)

A rather bland tuber, it can be cooked and is a major source of carbohydrates. It is used raw in fresh *lumpia*.

HERBS

Annatto (Achuete, Achiote)

The seeds of the *annatto* pods are reddish. Even though they grow all over Southeast Asia, their use in cooking is pretty much exclusive to Philippine cuisine. The red powder has no taste of its own and serves exclusively as food coloring in dishes such as *kare-kare*.

Basil (Sulasi)

Two different kinds of basil are available in the Philippines: sweet basil that resembles the Mediterranean variety and can be used for pesto and the like and lemon basil that smells and tastes a bit like lime. Both are widely available and grow easily in the garden or in a pot.

Chilli (Sili)

It is hard to believe that such a small plant can pack such a punch. If you want a memorable and intense culinary experience, just bite into a red chilli pepper. Feel how the tears shoot into your eyes in seconds. Chilli peppers are widely available and grow in many gardens. Filipinos often put a handful of them into a bottle of vinegar to spice it up.

Coriander (Unsuy)

You either love or hate coriander. There is no alternative. The spice, also known as Chinese parsley (in Southeast Asia) and cilantro in the West, has a strong,

distinctive taste and smells that some find exciting and others obtrusive. Cilantro is widely available and grows easily in a pot or in the garden. The seeds are also used as spice.

Indian Borage (Oregano)

Borage looks completely different from the Italian oregano. Botanists insist that it is not even remotely related to the spice that is used for pizzas and pasta sauces. However, the borage we have in our garden tastes and smells exactly like the Italian original and has been used successfully in Italian-style cooking. Borage grows in many gardens and on vacant lots. It is occasionally available in supermarkets.

Kaffir Lime Leaves

Both the leaves and the rind of the *kaffir* lime are used in cooking. I only use the leaves that give dishes such as *beef rendang* a unique aroma. The leaves grow like crazy in a pot or in the garden. They can also be kept in a sealed plastic bag in the freezer without losing their flavor.

Lemon Grass (Tanglad)

Lemon grass is an important base in Southeast Asian cooking. In the Philippines, it is liberally added to soups, stews, fish, and roasts, and always gives it a special aroma. While it is mostly the base that has the flavor, local cooks usually use a whole stalk of lemon grass, tied into a tidy knot, and discard it before serving.

Mint (Pudia)

Many varieties of mint are available in markets and occasionally in supermarkets. Mint also grows easily in pots and in the garden. It is not used widely in Philippine cooking, but it adds a nice twist to salads and sauces. You can make a surprisingly refreshing hot Magreb-style *touareg* tea if you cook the mint leaves in boiling water and add the same quantity of green tea.

Pandan

This member of the screwpine family adds an elegant, nutty flavor to many Southeast Asian dishes. The slim, grass-like leaves are cooked with rice or used to flavor table water. They are used for rice cakes and desserts. In Thailand, they are woven into small baskets in which chicken bits and other morsels are fried or barbecued. This smart herb should be a part of every kitchen garden.

Star Anise (Sanque)

This star-shaped fruit tastes similar to regular anise and looks very decorative. It is widely used in China, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia. It is one of the ingredients of the popular Vietnamese noodle soup *phó* and is also used for Indian *Biryani* rice, Brunei *nasi minyak*, or Filipino *pata tim*.

Turmeric (Dilaw)

This member of the ginger family has many uses. Its root is used similarly to regular ginger. The dried turmeric

powder is used in Indian curry powders or as a coloring agent for cakes, biscuits, and omelettes and occasionally as a replacement for saffron. In earlier times, it even served as a dye for clothes. Its leaves are often cooked with sauces and dishes like *beef rendang*.

Meat and poultry

Chicken, pork, and beef are easily available everywhere, as Filipinos love to eat meat and do so as often as they can. The quality obviously varies. If you want to play it safe, stick to Magnolia products, that come from large, industrialized farms and slaughter houses. If you want more organic meat, check the markets. You will find meat that is tastier and often from homegrown animals, however some of it might be dry and tough. According to an Australian pork importer I once met on the beach in Mindoro, the hog farmers in the Philippines use hormones that are outlawed in many other countries to keep their hogs slim. His advice was to buy fat pork meat, as it is less likely to contain hormones, and cut off the fat before cooking.

Local beef can be a bit tough, but a common trick to make it tender is to marinate it in beer or papaya juice over night. More exotic meats, such as lamb, rabbit, duck, goose, etc. can often be found in upscale-supermarkets, but be prepared to pay serious money for them. You will not need any of them for the recipes in this book anyway.

Sausages and ham

The local *longganisa* that look a bit like Spanish *chorizos* are quite a treat, if you manage to get the original version from Ilocos Norte where they are a traditional breakfast feature. The stuff in supermarkets is mostly made of offal in sugary marinade. *Longganisa* are not exactly easy to cook. First, you have to cook them in some water until the water evaporates. After the water is gone, you must fry them in their own fat. That can take some time.

All kinds of Western sausages, from hot dog to Wiener, from frankfurter to Hungarian, are available. The quality varies greatly. Then there is the mysterious Schüblig sausage that is said to be of German origin, but was totally unknown to me before I came to the Philippines. Apparently, the Schüblig is originally from Switzerland, but it seems to be more popular in the United States these days.

The ham in the freezers of supermarkets is mostly pitiful. You will occasionally find a nice ham cured in pineapple juice in speciality stores and in the markets. If only they would not cut it into such thick slices!

Fish and Seafood

The variety of fish and seafood available in the Philippines is mind-boggling. So are the quality and price. Newcomers might want to stick to more accessible varieties.

Tuna is available for reasonable prices and comes with the added benefit that you do not have to feel bad about eating fish out of overfished seas such as the Mediterranean. A local smaller tuna species is the *tanigue*, which is cheaper than regular tuna and has flaky, meaty flesh. Other top-notch fish that are easy to find include red snapper, blue marlin and tilapia, mackerel, swordfish, game fish and cod.

One local fish that you will not find anywhere else is the milkfish (*bangus*), the national fish of the Philippines. It is often sold marinated in vinegar and spices (and increasingly also in more exotic variations such as in pesto marinade) in markets and supermarkets. It is an easy, quick dinner as you only have to fry it for a few minutes. As the milkfish generally has a lot of bones, the so-called “boneless *bangus*” has become popular. (It still has some small bones so don’t just wolf it down without paying attention.) The best *bangus* comes from Dagupan. Fish from other provinces can occasionally taste a little muddy. Another popular fish is a grouper called *lapu-lapu* (named after the native chieftain from Mactan who slayed Magellan in 1521).

Seafood such as shrimp (*ulang*), octopus, squid (*pusit*), oysters (*talaba*), mussels (*tahong*), clams (*tulya*), and crabs (*alimango*) are found all over the archipelago even though their availability depends on the season and maritime weather. Sometimes you will also find abalone,

eels, and sea urchins. Try the local seaweed which is occasionally served as a salad. For those who are not afraid of anything edible, there are all kinds of snakes and live frogs on sale in some markets.

NUTS

Coconut (Buko)

Entire whole books have been written about the use of coconuts in Asian cooking. There is so much you can do with this amazing nut, and Philippine cuisine would be poor without it. It is commonly said in the Philippines that the coconut has 99 uses from the wood of the coconut tree that becomes hard if soaked in salt water to the coconut husks that keep mosquitoes away when burned. But even the coconut's culinary possibilities are endless.

First, there is the delicious coco water. I like to have a cup of fresh coconut water, the clouded liquid inside the young coconut that is available from street vendors and in juice stores, once or twice a week. It is almost impossible to get this coco water outside the tropics. Surprisingly, this water is almost never used for cooking, despite the fact that it is healthy and so clean that it can even be used as an intravenous fluid in emergencies if no blood donations are available.

The grated meat of the young coconut is often used for desserts. Then there is the coconut milk or cream, not to be confused with the coconut water. Both are available in cans, but if you have help, they will be happy to show you how fresh coconut milk is extracted from the grated flesh of ripe coconuts. The meat is a treat in itself, if you just eat it with a spoon or sprinkle it over desserts or rice cakes. I always keep a bag or two of it in the freezer.

Then there is the mysterious *macapuno*, a mutant coconut, which grows a softer flesh than a regular coconut. The *macapuno* is only found in the Philippines and Thailand. It is used for candy, cakes, tarts, ice cream, and *halo-halo*.

Finally, pharmacies sell virgin coconut oil, often used for cosmetic purposes. A few drops can elevate plain, bland dishes to the status of culinary wonders.

Peanuts (Mani)

Peanuts grow abundantly in the Philippines. They are available in different varieties everywhere. I had fresh young peanuts in the Philippines for the first time in my life. Then there are salted peanuts, adobo-style peanuts, peanuts with garlic and other spices, boiled peanuts, all sold by street vendors and in stalls in malls and supermarkets. Peanuts are used in many dishes, often to make a thick gravy (such as *kare-kare*), crushed over salads, or in hot chocolate or

coffee. They are cheap, healthy (if consumed moderately), and usually very good.

Cashew Nuts (Kasuy)

Cashew nuts also grow in the Philippines, but you might be surprised to find that they can be more expensive than the salted cashew nuts available in supermarkets in your home country. The reason seems to be that in the Philippines these nuts are harvested through a laborious manual process. The cashew nuts in Western supermarkets appear to be extracted by machines. Anyway, they are great. Always have a pack ready at home.

Pili Nut

The pili nut is an oblong, almond-like nut that is native to the Philippines and Malaysia. It is somewhat bland, but it is high in calcium, phosphorus, and potassium. It is hard to get unprocessed pili nuts which could substitute for almonds and pecan nuts in cakes and cookies. They are mostly found on the markets in the Bicol region. They have a hard shell and are difficult to crack. They are also mostly sold as a brittle and used for cakes or little boat-shaped tarts. I once found excellent pili nut marzipan at the Legazpi City airport.

Almonds, Walnuts, Hazelnuts, Pecan Nuts, Macadamia, etc.

These nuts are available in speciality stores, but they are usually expensive. Most of them can be replaced with local nuts when cooking or baking.

Tofu

The tasteless bean curd, made out of coagulating soy milk, has become a popular item in international cuisine due to its health benefits. In the Philippines, many varieties are available, from silken tofu to the tough variety, and they are very cheap. So play around with it. There are many ways of making this bland item tasty.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

Cheese (Queso)

Most supermarkets have cheeses like mozzarella, parmigiano, gruyere, edam, and others in the dairy section. Most often, they are from the US or New Zealand. They are nothing to write home about but are pricey. Sânti's and similar shops have the real thing from Europe, mostly from Switzerland, Italy, and Spain. But they come with a price. Essentially, cheese makes no sense in a tropical country, and eventually I more or less gave up on it. If I want to have a cheese sandwich or if a recipe calls for cheese, I use the local *kesong puti* which is wonderful.

Whole Milk and Other Dairy Products

The Rizal Dairy, founded by Swiss expat Jacqueline Haessig, sells cow's milk and milk products at Market! Market! and local farmers markets. Their whole milk is great. So are their Quark, yoghurts, and mozzarellas. They are not exactly cheap though, so for cooking I use Magnolia milk or any of the other pasteurized fresh milks that are available in every supermarket. Watch out, some of these "milks" are made out of milk powder!

Most locally available butters are salted, so pay attention if you want to make cakes. The available cream, sour cream, and yoghurt is nothing special, but they will do for cooking. These dairy products are not staples of Philippine cooking and need cooling so not every *sari-sari* store has them. Most of them do not rot for a long time, so they must be heavily processed.

Carabao's milk

Try it, if you can find it, and if you can overcome the aversion towards buffalo's milk that many people, Westerners as well as Filipinos, seem to have. The milk from the local water buffalo is easily the creamiest milk you have ever had. Carabao's milk seems to be making a comeback, and is occasionally available in supermarkets now.

Kesong Puti

In international gourmet circles, the Italian buffalo mozzarella is a prized and expensive item. In the Philippines, you have something that is just as good, yet is so cheap that it feels like sellers are giving it away. *Kesong puti* (white cheese) is a cottage cheese made out of the milk of the carabao. It is occasionally available in the dairy sections of big supermarkets, but that type is often bland and dry. If you want the real deal, look for it in stalls along the roads in Tagaytay or in farmers markets in Metro Manila where it is sold beautifully wrapped in banana leaves for around 20 peso a piece. Once you locate a source, you can have endless fun with this cheese. You can have it plain on bread, toast, and *pan de sal*. It is a delight with sliced tomato, a basil leaf, a dash of olive oil, a pinch of salt, and freshly ground pepper. You can toast it with ham and tomato. And you can replace mozzarella and other Italian cheeses in many recipes with it.

Condensada, Evaporada

Condensada is a sweet and thick condensed milk while *evaporada* is evaporated milk that is slightly sweetened. Both are widely used in Philippine cooking for desserts such as *halo-halo* and in the Singaporean *kopi C* and *kopi-gah-dai*.

Rice (*Bigas* or Uncooked Rice, *Kanin* or Cooked Rice)

Books have also been written about rice in Asian cooking. I cannot outdo any of them so I will keep this entry short. My advice is to look for organic, brown and red rice once you tire of the *dinorado*, *sinandomeng* and *milagrosa* varieties that are the most common in the Philippines. Local rice tends to be a bit dry and crumbly (which explains why Filipinos eat with fork and spoon—local rice is simply not sticky enough to be picked up with chopsticks). If you buy speciality rice, ask the vendors for cooking instructions. Many uncommon varieties need to be cooked longer or with more water than regular rice. A rice cooker will make things easier.

DRINKS

Water

The Maynilad Water Services claims that its water is safe to drink, but those *Manileños* who can afford it still get their drinking water from the delivery services that are everywhere. In restaurants, check if they filter or purify their water. In the provinces, tap water should be safe to drink, but it is always better to ask.

Soft Drinks

Filipinos love sugary soft drinks like Cola Cola and its local variants. Recently, soft drinks based on green tea have become fashionable all over Asia. The Philippines is no exception. All that stuff is too sweet for me, so I stick to water most of the time. Many imported orange, cranberry, grape, plum, or grapefruit juices claim on their boxes that they are “100 percent pure,” but they still taste like fruit extract plus syrup and water to me. Fortunately, I can never get enough of the local pineapple juice which thrills me every time I open a can. Make sure it is unsweetened. There is local mango juice, but for some reason it always has sugar added.

Fruit Shakes and Buko Juice

The growers of the best mangoes in the world obviously make the best mango shakes in the world. There are plenty of other fruit shakes that can be made out of tropical fruits available from little stalls and juice bars. Be sure to try the green mango shake. However, be aware that all shakes are spiked with generous servings of sugar or syrup. The juice of the young coconut, the *buko*, is also available widely. Make sure that you get the fresh stuff right from the *buko*, if you do not want to get a sugar rush as the vendors typically sweeten their drinks generously.

BEER, WINE, AND SPIRITS

Beer

San Miguel Pale also known as San Mig or simply SMB is a pilsener. It is a decent beer and compares favorably with other Southeast Asian brews. It is the most popular beer in Hong Kong, and it is also sold in other Asian countries. It is great served ice cold on a hot day. If you are a beer drinker, you will learn to like it since more often than not there are no other options anyway as the beers from San Miguel Corporation enjoy a virtual monopoly on the local market. There are also San Miguel Light, San Miguel Strong Ice, and San Miguel Super Dry which are just awful. Then there is Red Horse, a malt liquor with slightly more alcohol than regular beer. It is the preferred beer of the boys in the barrio and others drinkers, who want more buzz for their buck. It has a slightly sweet taste when cold and will give you a headache the next morning.

Some stores carry Cerveza Negra, a local lager. Try it, it is a welcome diversion.

Red and White Wine

Vino de mesa used to be a lunch staple for the upper class during the time of the Spanish occupation. Even today wine is a status symbol for those who can afford it. You can find Californian brands such as Carlo Rossi or Gallo and a number of red table wines from Spain, France, South

America, and Australia in supermarkets and liquor stores. White wine is more problematic. Anything that is above table wine quality is expensive and hard to get. There simply isn't a big market for wine. Those who have developed a taste for it can afford to pay almost every price. After drinking mediocre wines which I felt were too expensive for a year, I settled for an occasional glass of red wine from California for dinner, and focused on local spirits which are of incredible value.

Sparkling Wine

A popular *pasalubong* (gift) is *Novellino*, a sweet sparkling wine. Don't bother, it's awful.

Fruit Wines

As grapes do not grow easily in the Philippines, other tropical fruits are used in some areas to make wine. You can find such exotic varieties as pineapple, mango, and even papaya wine. In Palawan, one university developed a cashew wine, made out of the fruits that contain the precious cashew nuts. Some of these wines are awful and will give you a terrible hangover. However, I once found a pineapple wine in Sagada that I still lust after. And my vegetable *suki* at the Lung Center market one time gave me a bottle of strawberry wine from Baguio as a Christmas present that blew my mind when I had it on a cold January evening in the traditional way: lukewarm. Sample these wines that are fairly cheap. You might find a winner.

Rice Wine

In certain regions of the Cordilleras, people brew a rice wine called *tapuy* that is used for many traditional ceremonies. It is marvelous, easily one of the best-kept secrets among alcoholic beverages in the country. In my opinion it can compete with Japanese sake. Despite research by the Philippine Rice Research Institute, the production of *tapuy* remains laborious. Nobody has managed to pull off something on an industrial scale yet. So it is difficult to get *tapuy* in Metro Manila. PhilRice Tapuy is occasionally available at Market! Market! and other organic markets. If you are lucky to find it, stock up on it. Even if you do not enjoy it yourself, it is a great gift that will stun even some Filipinos. However, its shelf life is not long. You should not store it for more than six months.

In the Cordilleras, you can also find *binubudan*, a fermenting, lightly sparkling variety of rice wine that is fantastic. It is only sold in certain areas in Northern Luzon as it is hard to transport and spoils quickly. Take advantage of the opportunity if you come across this wonderful drink during a trip to the mountains.

Brandy

Another Spanish legacy in the Philippines are the many *soleras* sold in liquor stores and supermarkets. Familiar Spanish brands such as *Magno* or *Veterano* are available at Rustan's and other upscale supermarkets. Once I discovered

the local *Generoso*, I felt no need to pay marked-up prices for those imports anymore. It is considered the poor man's brandy. If you see men in slippers, shorts, and nothing else sitting around a bottle on a Saturday night or a Sunday afternoon, chances are that the bottle contains *Generoso*. It is ridiculously cheap (around 60 pesos a bottle), but with its nutty flavor, it is one of the best brandies I have ever had. If you bring it as a *pasalubong* when you visit your home country, people will beg for more.

Rum

There are many types of rum available. As with the brandies, the choice ranges from headache-inducing firewater to very fine indeed. The best in my opinion is the 15-year-old Tanduay, which is cheap (around P250), considering its age and quality. It stands out not only among the local rums but can compete internationally. This rum would easily sell in Europe for 20 Euros or more.

Gin

I only drink gin in mixed drinks. For this Ginebra San Miguel serves its purpose. I would not drink it straight though many Filipinos do. The smaller bottles are really funky with their crown caps (meaning, you have to empty them in one session). National Artist Fernando Amorsolo designed the beautiful Art Nouveau-style label in 1917. (The sketch won him a stipend to study painting in Spain, and the rest is Philippine art history.) Gin is surprisingly popular in

the Philippines, considering the fact that to my knowledge juniper berries do not even grow in the country. There is even the term “Gin-bulag,” gin-blind, that describes the state that you enter when you consume too much of it.

Tuba and Lambanog

Tuba is a strong, home-brewed palm wine, its roughly distilled version is called *lambanog*. Give it a try, when you find it during a trip to the provinces.

OTHER INGREDIENTS

Vinegar (Suka)

Vinegar is one of the most essential ingredients in Philippine cooking. Its acetic acid preserves food well in the tropical climate. The selection of vinegars in the Philippines is gigantic wide. You get the impression that vinegar can be made out of almost everything: sugarcane, rice, coconut, nipa palm, even cashew fruits.

Bagoong and Patis

Bagoong to Westerners is another gross-out Philippine food. It is an anchovy paste made out of the tiny bonnet mouth fish. Its smell is extremely repulsive to an untrained nose. However, many recipes call for it even though it can always be replaced with *patis* or fish sauce. Local *patis* is

usually rather strong. Some Filipinos prefer fish sauce from Thailand for its lighter taste.

Flour (Arina)

All-purpose flour is available in almost every shop although it often has an unpleasant aftertaste like it was stored too long. Whole-wheat flour, rye flour, and others are available at Sánti's, Healthy Options, and other stores that carry European specialties or health food.

Sugar (Asukal)

White sugar, brown sugar, confectioner's sugar, and the like are available everywhere. Then there is *muscovado*, an unrefined brown sugar with a strong flavor of molasses that is made out of sugarcane juice and is healthier than refined sugar. It goes well with coffee and tea.

Chocolate (Xocolate)

European Toblerone and Ritter Sport chocolates are available in most large supermarkets. Then there are the *tableas*, round dry powdery chocolate tablets used to make *tsokolate*, a warm chocolate drink that is popular around Christmas or for breakfast.

Tea (Tsa)

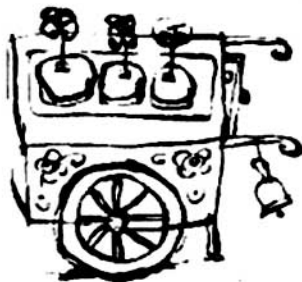
Unlike in most Asian countries, tea is not a common drink in the Philippines. We mostly stick to Lipton tea, even though other brands are available in most supermarkets.

Coffee (Kape)

Coffee used to be one of the major articles exported by the Philippines until the 1990s when an infestation called “coffee rust” wrecked local coffee farms. Tough competition from coffee growers in South America and Vietnam also added to the downfall of the Philippine coffee industry. Today it has become difficult to find *kape barako*, once among the finest types of coffee in the world. Visit farmers markets for *barako* or Batangas coffee.

Ice Cream (Sorbetes)

The widely available Selecta and Nestle ice cream tend to be watery and tasteless. But Magnolia ice cream is quite good and comes in many intriguing tropical flavors such as *ube*, mango, *macapuno*, lychee, avocado, jackfruit, and taro. Then there is cheese ice cream! Look for Arce ice cream that is made out of *carabao*’s milk and is super creamy.



Read On

If you want to learn more about Filipino cooking, there is a growing number of good books on the subject that not only give you recipes but often contain some cultural and culinary history. Then, there are many blogs where Filipinos do one of the things they like best (apart from eating): talk about food. Here are some recommendations.

BOOKS

Felice Prudente Sta. Maria
The Governor-General's Kitchen

Anvil Publishing, 2005

This is, hands down, the best book on Philippine cooking and I am not saying this because it was published by the same publishers as this volume. It is not really a cookbook, even though it contains a lot of recipes. Rather it is a cultural history of food of the Philippines. It is so rich in information that it is impossible to digest it in one concentrated reading. I occasionally open it and always find a tidbit of information that I missed on first reading. The recipes are mostly from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Felice Prudente Sta. Maria and Erlinda Enriquez Panilillo (ed.)

Slow Food. Philippine Culinary Traditions

Anvil 2005

A collection of essays plus some assorted recipes compiled in honor of the late food critic Doreen Fernandez who (re-)introduced the concept of slow food to the Philippines. While the essays are occasionally personal and meandering, the book gives you an idea of how important food and food preparation in the Philippines were, even among common folks, before the advent of fastfood chains.

Amy Besa and Romy Dorotan

Memories of Philippine Kitchens

Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2006

Besa and Dorotan run Cendrillon, a Filipino gourmet restaurant in New York, and they combined some of their house recipes with anecdotes and food histories. The book is beautifully designed and illustrated.

Guide to Restaurants in Manila

Encyclea Publications, 2005

This is useful but by no means complete. The style can be a bit bitchy at times—that is what you get when you let chefs write on the operations of other chefs.

James Oseland

Cradle of Flavor: Home Cooking from the Spice Islands of Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia

W. W. Norton, 2006

Oseland has lived in Singapore for 20 years and does a magnificent job in explaining the many uniquely Southeast Asian ingredients and what to do with them. As a comprehensive introduction to Malay cooking, this book provides a good context to the cuisine of the Philippines.

Tan Su-Lyn

Inside the Southeast Asian Kitchen

ArtPostAsia 2007

Sponsored by ASEAN, this is a cheaper alternative to *Cradle of Flavor*, covering all Southeast Asian countries. The recipe selection from the different countries seems occasionally arbitrary (no *adobo* recipe from the Philippines?), but as a whole it gives a good overview of different approaches to food in the region.

A good book on tropical or Southeast Asian fruits, vegetables and herbs that should be part of your cookbook library is *Handy Pocket Guides* from Periplus Editions. There are many other good books on typical Southeast Asian ingredients available in Philippine bookstores or in your own country, so take your pick.

BLOGS

Market Manila

www.marketmanila.com

This is easily the best Internet resource on Philippine cooking written by an anonymous food fanatic who seems to spend most of his waking life cooking and eating. Many of his posts seem better researched than the whole lifestyle section of certain Philippine newspapers. After all, who would spend a week in the kitchen to come up with the perfect *budbud kabog*? I check this blog regularly for information and for reminders on what to find in the markets of Manila in any season. The entries often spawn interesting reader's discussions. Individual entries sometimes drag on and on and searching for something in this blog is cumbersome, but as whole, it is unbeatable as an online-resource.

Pinoy Cook

www.pinoycook.net

A professional blog by retired lawyer, writer, and foodie Connie Veneracion. It has a more commercial bent than "Market Manila," but it is a good source of information on Chinese-Philippine recipes.

Acknowledgment

I thank my family for their patience with my often misguided attempts to try new recipes. Susanne, Alice, and Christina, I know you would like to eat spaghetti with tomato sauce, pancakes, and apple sauce more often than I as *maitre de cuisine* allowed for!

I thank my mother who was the first to introduce me to the wonders of the kitchen when she let me help her make Christmas cookies.

I thank our helpers Bing, Beth, and Jenny for tolerating my endless experiments with new dishes and those crummy printouts of recipes from the Internet. I am very grateful for the effort that you put into dishes that were completely foreign to you and that you must have often found odd or even repulsive. At the same time, I learned a lot from you. You taught me some of the best recipes in this book!

I thank all the chefs and waiters, my *suki* at the Lung Center market, and all the *ate* and *lola* who freely shared recipes and information on Philippine food with me and at times even let me watch them cook. It has been a pleasure.

I also thank Karina Bolasco of Anvil Publishing for accepting this book idea during a three minute cell phone conversation and overseeing all the aspects of book production in a highly professional and enjoyable way. I am indebted to the Anvil staff for turning a spotty manuscript into a good, hopefully useful book.

Nobody ever thinks of these people and my mentioning them will not make any difference to them. But I thank the nameless army of people who chop vegetables, stir sauces, and clean pots and plates for next to no money in the kitchens of the restaurants in Manila and the rest of the country.

Finally, I thank all the Filipinos who welcomed us with great hospitality and friendliness into their homes and made our stay here so pleasant that we ended up staying much longer than we planned.