

Philippine FOOD & LIFE

Domingo Lunes Martes Miércoles Jueves Viernes Sábado

by Gilda Cordero-Fernando

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THE PROVINCIAL CHRISTMAS TABLE

Langlang -

a soup of *sotanghon* noodles with chicken bits
and *tengang daga*, a mushroom.

Estofado -

pork leg with *saba* bananas in a sauce with burnt sugar.

Relyeno -

or *galantina*, a pork or chicken roll of ground meat,
ham, sausages and hardboiled eggs.

Tamales -

ground rice delicacy with boiled chicken, ham and egg on top,
wrapped in banana leaf.

Empanada -

the old-fashioned type made of ground pork and raisins
in a crisp, bite-size pastry crust.

Suman sa palaspas -

same as *suman sa ibos*; a plain glutinous rice roll
wrapped tightly in a coconut leaf.

Tsokolate -

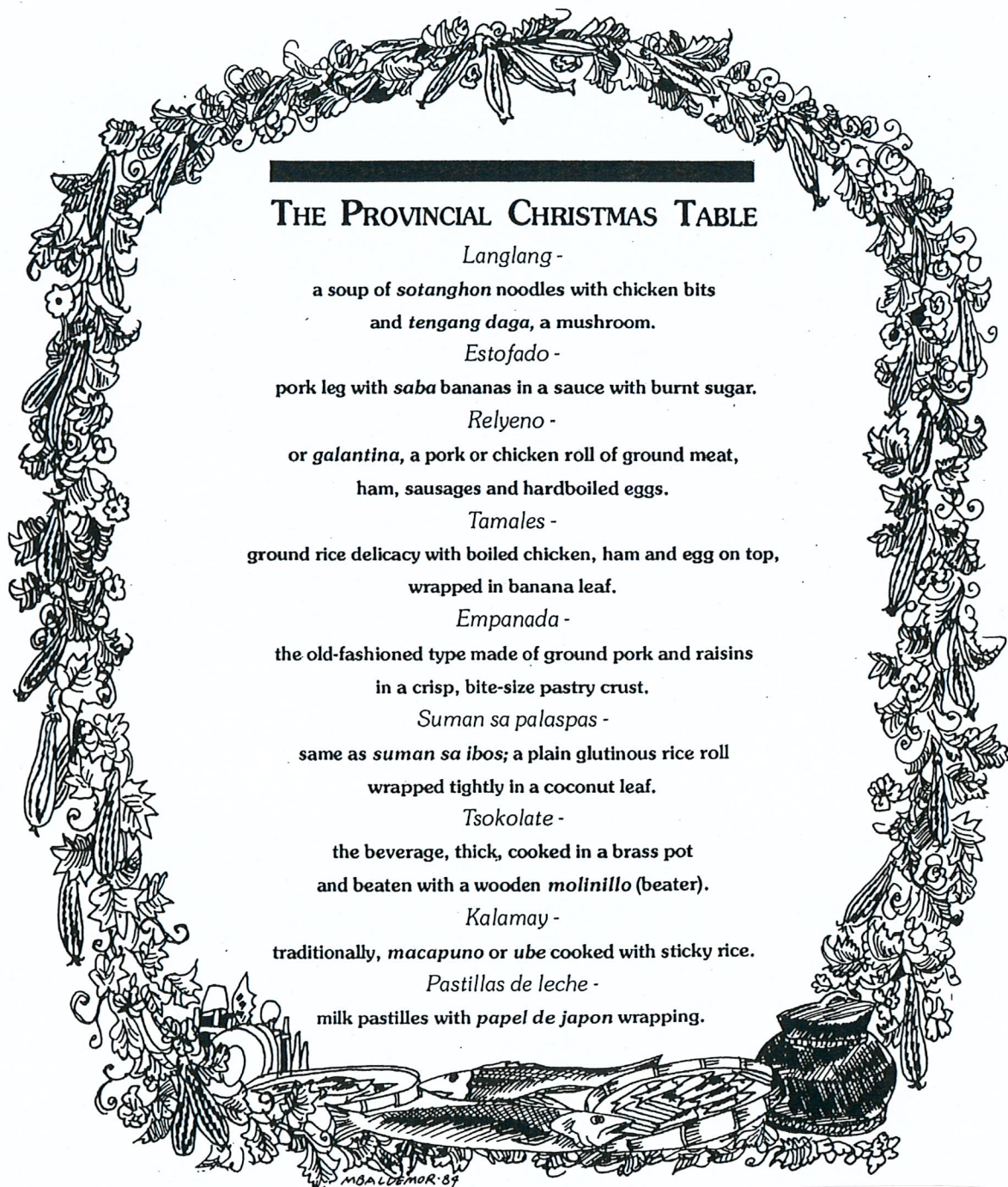
the beverage, thick, cooked in a brass pot
and beaten with a wooden *molinillo* (beater).

Kalamay -

traditionally, *macapuno* or *ube* cooked with sticky rice.

Pastillas de leche -

milk pastilles with *papel de japon* wrapping.



MOBALDEMOR '89

the big houses. A birdwoman sold snipes caught by her husband and could be depended upon to dress and even cook them as a free additional service. A *litson* woman sold parts of the excellent *litson* her husband roasted on Sundays, with its fine liver sauce, all of which she carried in a *bakol* (deep basket) balanced on her head. A *kari-kari* woman carried her specialty of oxtail and back-of-the-neck parts in a kettle for homeowners who didn't want to take the trouble to do such a fussy recipe.

The town's families of consequence always began their meal with soup: old-fashioned soups included *fideos*, thin, yellow noodles, and *utak* (cow's brains). *Fideos* could also be made with chicken livers and gizzard. Another starter was *sopa de ajo* or onion soup. The food the old families remember is mostly of Spanish derivation: *croquetas*, a ground meat ball encased in mashed potato dipped in egg batter; fried *relyenong sili*, red and green bell peppers stuffed with ground pork; *arroz a la Cubana*, fried rice in individual mounds, each topped by a sunny side-up egg, the rice mounds surrounding a brown island of ground beef decorated with slices of fried *saba* bananas. In a pinch, there was *torta de patatas*, good old potato omelet. Indeed, one old cook commented that even if Laguna was coconut country, they are not particularly fond of coconut milk cooking unlike those from Quezon or Bikol. Its popular dishes are mostly on the sauteed side, "*panay daan sa kawali* " (mostly passed through the frying pan).

In the old days, *sotanghon* soup was called *langlang*. Its ingredients included those transparent noodles, *tengang daga* (rat's ear) mushroom, *hibe* or dried shrimps, sliced boiled chicken, and a topping of — surprise! surprise! — chopped fresh *ubud* or the pith of coconut trunk. Another unusual topping of old was fried *bihon* — for sour *kilawing bituka*, chopped innards with vinegar and onions. Please not to confuse these two favorites — *estofado*, which is Iberian in origin, with *humba*, which is Chinese-Filipino. *Estofado* is pig's leg with a sweetish *toyo*-based sauce, and it originally included fried *pan de sal* and *saba* bananas or *kamotes* speared on a barbecue stick on the same platter. On the other hand, *humba* contains pork *liempo* or *casim* and banana blossoms also in a sweetish *toyo*-based sauce but with *tahuri* (fermented soy bean paste).

Do not confuse either the holiday's chicken *relyeno* with *galantina*. Both are deboned

and stuffed chickens, *relyeno* with wings showing, *galantina* rolled, with deboned wings tucked inside. *Releño* is brown roasted in the oven, *galantina* is boiled and more bland. *Galantina* filling includes, aside from ground pork and chicken, hardboiled eggs, Vienna sausage, maybe ham, stuffed green olives and carrots. The basic filling of *relyeno* is spicier, with more ham, pork sausage, *chorizo de Bilbao* and raisins (no eggs).

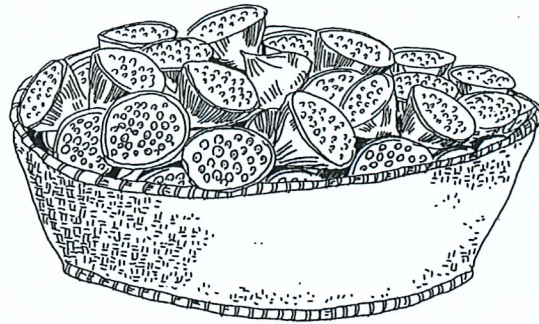
What did the Laguna farmer who stayed for weeks on end in a remote farmland eat? He got a few *kamote* and *sili* tops, put in a little ginger and water, and it was a soup. He cooked a banana heart or bamboo shoots or even the pith of a *kaong* plant with a fish, and it was a viand. Whenever available, baby mudfish, called *bakuli*, were boiled with leafy vegetables and *kamias*. But the real survival vegetable was the pitch of a banana tree. The farmer chose a young tree, shook it to let the water and the sticky sap flow down. He removed the outer layers of the trunk, got the pith, which was then chopped finely and cooked it in coconut milk.

The early morning cry one hears from hawkers of breakfast cakes are "*Puto, kutsinta, bibingka, pasingaw!*" or "*Putong bula, suman!*" In the afternoon, the flat basket carried "*Butsi, pilipit, unday-unday!*" Lusty voices roused one from siesta with "*Bili na kayo ng bikang-bikang, marhuya, at butsi!*" or "*Maja kayo diyan! Suman!*" Pagsanjan *butsi* is fried glutinous rice and chopped *buko*, wrapped around mashed mongo roughly the size of a pingpong ball. *Pasingaw* is a steamed ricecake resembling a *bibingka*; *putong bula*, or bubble ricecake, is a large, white *puto* sliced on the bias.

The town *pilipit* is not the Chinese sweetmeat most people know but *malagkit* mixed with *buko*, dropped in syrup, twisted into an eight, and deep fried. *Unday-unday* is a little flat *galapong* cake with a dimple, dusted with grated coconut. *Maja* is a gelatinous coconut milk



cake. *Marhuya* is fried bananas. *Suman* is a roll of unsugared *malagkit* boiled in coconut milk and wrapped in a banana leaf, still the most popular *kakanin* all over the Philippines. The disappearing *bikang-bikang* was a fried patty of rough julienned strips of *kamote* or



MBALDEMBA, 1953
(*beno* = lotus buds)

saba bananas dipped in *achuete*-colored batter. Occasionally, the *merienda* hawkers also carried *haliging bulak* ("housepost of cotton"), better known as *bitchu-bitchu* to Manilans. Some vendors carried *beno*, lotus buds from Laguna lake, which had a fresh taste and looked somewhat like boiled peanuts when shelled. Also hawked was *lipote*, a sour, purplish black fruit similar to, but rounder and smaller than *duhat*.

These were the quick snacks. For the better off, there was a more formal *merienda* at four o'clock for which one had to sit at the long table with its forever blue glass *frutera* of yellow bananas and ball cheese or *keso de bola*. Edam cheese in pre-war days was so popular, in fact, that housewives who could afford it bragged that every *tabo* (bathwater dipper) they used was a classy, hemispheric can of the *keso de bola*. Formal *merienda* could be *suman* paired with *pinaltok*, glutinous rice balls cooked in coconut milk (called *bilo-bilo* in Manila and *panindot* in Batangas). Another kind of *ginataan* that appeared during *merienda* was *totong*, which was *malagkit* topped with mongo beans, roasted and cracked by being rolled over with an empty bottle.

Okoy, too, was a treasured repast. A fried patty made of *galapong*, duck's egg and unshelled shrimps, *okoy* is dipped in vinegar, garlic and pepper. *Okoy* is also eaten with *pasingaw*, a kind of sweet ricecake. *Champorado* or chocolate rice porridge is properly a *merienda*, though some people look for it at breakfast time. *Champorado* is accompanied with *tuyo* (dried fish) or *tapa* (dried meat).

A common sit-down *merienda* is a slice of *bibingka* which in Pagsanjan is normally the size of a cartwheel and two inches thick. It is best eaten with Brun butter (now margarine),

kesong puti and a cup of thick chocolate. The best *kesong puti* or Laguna cottage cheese is soft, fresh-tasting but not salty, and elastic enough not to crumble. When old, it is fried before eating, but newly made *kesong puti* is delicious to just mash into hot rice.

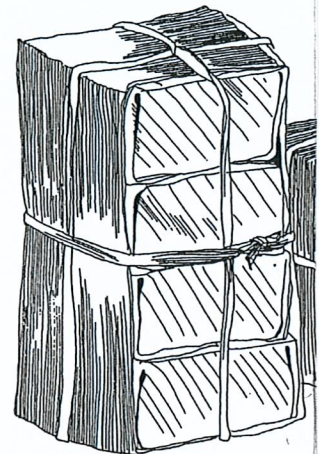
Kesong puti originated in Lumbang, Laguna, which used to produce the best kind. Sta. Cruz is the more commercial producer of *kesong puti*. To make cheese, carabao milk is cooked in large vats to which is added salt and vinegar till it curdles. It is then strained and molded. Each piece is individually wrapped in banana leaves and sold in the familiar stack of three or four, the same way it has been packed a hundred years ago. Los Baños is a Johnny-come-lately in the cottage cheese trade, its main contribution being to standardize and sanitize the product and substitute its folk art wrapping with a clean plastic bag.

Dessert is *gulaman* made out of agar-agar from the sea, served in a glass of cold *gata*. Or ripe guava, peeled, cut up and served in coconut milk and sugar. The local *halo-halo* has a unique feature in the inclusion of *tubo*, the round spongy growth inside a very mature coconut which eventually becomes a shoot.

(In Pagsanjan, housewives also cook *tubo* in syrup, which is bottled and sold as a local delicacy.)

Also a famous delicacy of Pagsanjan is *nata de piña*, actually an edible, transparent and gelatinous white mold. Housewives of old always had large jars covered with cheese cloth on top of their *paminggalan* (food cupboard) growing this culture. In the bottom of the jars were pineapple skins chopped up finely and mixed with a formula of sugar and liquor that soon grew this *nata* and, if one was lucky, it filled the whole jar. It was a matter of pride to be able to produce the thickest *nata*. Housewives went around asking each other how their *nata* was growing and if it was already thick enough to scrape off for the coming fiesta. *Nata* was served as a dessert much like *tubo* and *kaong* but was considered more festive. Cubes of it were sometimes incorporated into a *budin* (local name for pudding). One imaginative housewife stuffs *nata* in carved *kalamansi* preserves.

Certain *kakanin* make an appearance on certain seasons. Just as *tamales*, *suman* and *bibingka* are for Christmas, Holy Week is for *kalamay*, a big, sticky ricecake, and *tikoy*. The local *tikoy* is somewhat, but not quite, the Chinese *tikoy*, for it is round and has a toasted color.



A wake was something everyone in the province went to. In the old days, the corpse was kept in the house for three days, and these were days of feasting. The widow was supposed to cook her grief away in a river of *sotanghon* or *bami*, a salty *pancit* consisting of extra fat noodles and a *tahuri* sauce topped with *kamias* slices and toasted garlic. An alternative to *bami* was *sotanghon* (crystal noodle and chicken soup), and both are traditionally eaten, for contrast, with sweet *sinokmani* (quaint local name for *biko*).

Since Pagsanjan had its waterfall, picnics there, more than anywhere else, were a regular feature of the town life. For an occasion such as a birthday, a day during Holy Week, or the last day of the Flores de Mayo, when one had Manila guests, a *bantilan* or bamboo shed with four posts and benches was built on the free-flowing river. Used as plates were curved sections of one layer of banana trunk. The usual picnic foods were *adobo*, vegetable *lumpia* (eggroll), and the ever-present relish of chopped red eggs and tomato. If one were going to the river with only two or three friends, none of these ceremonies was necessary. One made a simple *maluto* (food pack): a piece of banana leaf for wrapping was softened over the fire, pork lard wiped over it and salt sprinkled. A mound of hot rice was then mashed on the greased leaf. Hot *adobo* was placed in the center of the rice and wrapped — a picnic package!

Today, the Pagsanjan river, like most rivers in our beautiful towns, is polluted by factory and house wastes. Nobody can swim in it anymore. Coconuts used to be tied together by the hundreds to make a raft, which was how coconuts were transported to the next town. The shore was filled with coconut husks and the rancid smell of old copra. Today, most of the old residents are settled in Manila, and Pagsanjan Falls belongs to the tourists. When Pagsanjeños come to visit the old hometown, the children swim in the concrete pools of the tourist resorts, and their *maluto* is plastic-wrapped chippies and synthetic juice in tetrapaks.

Bulakan

Puto Caramba

This is a *puto* that is an *ukoy* — with an original touch.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup *kalabasa* (squash)
- 2 cups small shrimps, unpeeled
- 1 cup *pinipig*
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1/2 cup corn starch
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup water

Procedure:

1. Slice *kalabasa* into thin strips.
 2. Mix flour, corn starch and water to make a batter.
 3. Shape individual nests of *kalabasa*, *pinipig*, shrimps and onions, pouring in small amounts of the batter.
 4. Fry in deep fat until golden brown.
- Dipping sauce: vinegar, garlic, salt and pepper

—MILA S. ENRIQUEZ

Nueva Ecija

Adobong May Sabaw

Ingredients:

- 3/4 kilo pork *pigi* or
- 1/4 kilo beef liver
- 1 head garlic (1/4 cup)
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 3/4 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 kilo pork liver and kidney (remove white membrane)

Procedure:

1. Cut pork kidney and liver into 2-inch cubes.
2. Marinate with garlic, salt and vinegar for one hour or more.
3. Simmer in medium low heat for 20 minutes.
4. Remove liver and kidney and continue simmering until pork is tender.
5. Remove from heat.
6. Retrieve pork from liquid.
7. Separate all bits of garlic and fry in lard.
8. Add to it pork kidney and liver, and sauté till brown.
10. Put back in sauce.
11. Add water and simmer for about 15 minutes.
12. Serve with steamed side dish of *kangkong*, and relish of tomatoes, *sibuyas* Tagalog and *bagoong* Balayan.

—SONNY TINIO

Pampanga

Bringhe

Bringhe is the poor man's *paella*, served at country weddings and fiestas in Central Luzon. A large amount of *bringhe* is placed in a big basket (*tiklis*) lined with leaves. It is served by scooping and tamping the yellow rice into a cup and overturning it, molded, onto each guest's plate.

Ingredients:

- 1 kilo dressed chicken
- 5 cups coconut milk (extracted from 2 pieces of mature coconut)
- 4 cups *malagkit* rice
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/4 cup cooking oil
- 1 medium-size onion, sliced
- 5 tablespoons yellow ginger root juice (*dilaw*)
- 1/4 cup *patis*
- 1 medium-size green pepper, roasted and peeled, cut into cubes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 hardboiled eggs, sliced
- Banana leaf wilted over fire (remove midrib)

Procedure:

1. Split chicken at the joints into desired serving pieces (8-12).
2. Clean and wash thoroughly. Drain. Set aside.

3. Add 3-4 cups hot water to grated coconut. Squeeze coconut with both hands until the milk is extracted little by little. Strain. Set aside.

4. Wash *malagkit* rice three times. Drain well. Set aside.

5. In a saucepan and over a strong flame, sauté garlic, and add onions and chicken.

6. Cook till chicken is slightly brown.

7. Add *patis* and ginger root juice.

8. Add clean *malagkit* rice, and cook for about 10 minutes.

9. Prepare green pepper. Set aside.

10. Peel yellow ginger, crush with mortar and pestle, squeeze, strain and extract yellow juice.

11. Add coconut milk to chicken mixture gradually and stir. Cover.

12. Cook until rice is almost done, adjusting the flame so as not to scorch the pan.

13. Prepare another heavy-duty container. Line the bottom with wilted banana leaves.

14. Transfer chicken/rice carefully to the layer of banana leaves. Cover rice/chicken/pepper with another layer of banana leaves. Put lid over cooking utensil and steam over a low flame until rice is done.

Bikol

Gulay na Lada

This recipe is popularly known as Bikol Express after the train because it is so hot one has to run for water. For non-Bikolanos, the chilis are soaked longer.

Ingredients:

3/4 kilo chilis, long, pointed variety (*panigang*)

1/2 kilo pork belly or *liempo*

1 large coconut, grated

1 cup water

1 cup fresh *alamang* (miniature shrimps)

1 onion, sliced

1 tablespoon garlic, crushed

1/3 cup cooking oil

Procedure:

1. Seed and slice chilis slant-wise into 1/2 inch circles.

2. Wash well and soak in a bowl of water with one teaspoon salt.

3. Change water. Soak further.

4. Simmer pork in water till tender.

5. Drain and cut into 1/4" x 1/2" cubes. Set aside.

6. Prepare *gata*.

7. Sauté onions and garlic in oil till soft.

8. Add *alamang* and stir fry till a little toasted.

9. Add pork and *gata*. Stir until *gata* is thick. Put in chilis.

10. Simmer until *gata* turns oily.

— IMPERIAL FAMILY

Rizal

Sinigang na Kanduli sa Miso

This is a favorite of lakeshore or river dwellers.

Ingredients:

1 kilo *kanduli* (fresh-water fish)

1 tablespoon garlic, macerated

3/4 cup tomatoes, sliced

5 *mustasa* leaves, cut 2-in. long

1/2 kilo green tamarind fruit (sourness to taste)

5 tablespoons cooking oil

1/2 cup onions, chopped

2 raddishes, sliced

1/4 kilo *miso* or soybean paste

3-4 cups rice water

Salt to taste

Procedure:

1. Boil the tamarind fruit in one cup of water. When tender, mash and remove seeds and skin. Set aside the extracted juice.

2. Sauté garlic, onions and tomatoes in hot cooking oil. Add the soybean paste and cover with four cups soup stock. Boil a little.

3. Add the raddishes, and after one minute, add the *kanduli* and cook for five minutes.

4. Add the tamarind juice and the *mustasa* leaves, also salt to taste. Simmer until done.

5. Serve hot with *balaw-balaw* (fermented fish-and-rice sauce).

— PERDIGON VOCALAN