

## **Filipino Courtship - Tradition vs. Modern**

The Filipino way of courtship is probably among the most romantic in the world.

### **TRADITION**

Courting under Filipino tradition gives very big importance on the value of respecting the woman and her family and strictly adhering with proper rules set by society for pursuing a lady. This practice which dates back to the Spanish times prohibits men to be very aggressive or becoming even when they want the lady very much. One cannot just talk and approach a lady in the street and ask her number or address. If a young man sees a lady he likes he should seek out the help of a go-between, usually a common friend of both family, to ask the permission of the girl's father whether he can visit them in their house. This is the gentlemanly thing to do so the parents will most likely approve unless of course the lady is just a child.

When the approval is obtained, the suitor can then come to the house with the go-between who will initiate the introductions to the family. The parents in turn will introduce their daughter to the gentleman. In this stage, the suitor is expected to bring "pasalubong" or gifts to the family and a special one to the girl he likes. This he will have to do everytime he visits the girl's house. In the Philippines, when you court a lady, you have to court her whole family as well. In this first visit, the couple will not be left alone on their own to get to know each other. It will just be an informal chatting and introduction and getting-to-know stage between the suitor and the family and making clear of the suitor's intention to pursue the host's daughter.

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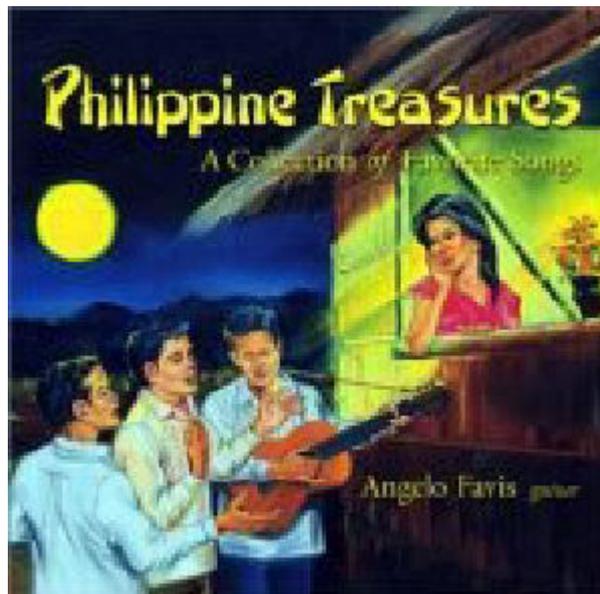
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After the initial visit, the suitor is then expected to woo the girl by showing up in her house more often and establish rapport with the her family. This is the stage where he does the “paninilbihan” or servitude. He serves the girls family in any way that he can to show to them and to the girl of his sincere intentions and love for her, be it by chopping firewood, fetching water from the well, etc. It is a way of saying “I will do anything to prove my love for you”.

At night, he will sing “harana” or love songs outside the girls house by the window with a guitar and his friends serving as back ups. They will sing and wait until the lady finally opens the window and invites them into the house. They will then be served with light snacks and they can talk in the presence of the girls parents and the man’s friends. Note that in most times, the couple will be with either friends or families. It is considered inappropriate to leave an unmarried couple unsupervised in those times no matter what their ages are.



harana

The process of courting a Filipina in the traditional sense is a long and arduous process. It is expected that a Filipina will play hard-to-get when court because that is the norm. No matter how much she likes the man, she has to show utmost restraint and disinterest. Girls are made to believe that men will value them more if they are made to work hard before letting them have what they want.

So after a long period of paninilbihan and a series of haranas, the girl can finally accept the suitor’s love. At this stage, the couple can now start dating in public but always in the company of a chaperon. The man will still continue to come to the house and help out.

When the time comes when he feels he is ready to get married, he and his parent’s will have to come to the girl’s house and the parents of the boy will have to formally ask the hand of the hand of the girl in marriage to their son. This stage is called “Pamamanhikan” or “Paghingi ng Kamay”. In doing this, they will have to bring with them, lots of food and presents as well as the dowry that they can present to the girls parents.

In the Philippines, dowry is given by the boy's family, not by the girl's family. This is because we give high value to the women in our society and giving them away is not easy. When the two families have come to an agreement as to the dowry, the **wedding** date is set, a ring is presented to the girl and the couple is said to be betrothed. A small feast is then held with the food brought by the boy's family.

## MODERN

Although a lot of our traditional wedding practice is still being observed these days there are modifications and "evolutions" that has been introduced to it that gives it a more modern version.

Modern Filipino courtship revolves more on the liberalism of Filipino youth. If Filipinos of opposite sex were not allowed to mingle in public in the old days, these days that is already possible. These has allowed courtship to be a little more lenient on youngsters. You can now meet a girl you like through a common friend or on a party but never on a street as the same is still regarded as inappropriate.



a night out in manila

Most parents would still want their children to be courted inside the house though some modern and liberal-minded Filipinas don't do this anymore and prefers to meet up somewhere else instead, a clear disregard of tradition and parental respect.

Modern courtship does not really have a pattern. It could start from a group date where friends would pair friends up and tease them. Friends could play cupid and set a couple up and leave them on their own to talk then before you know it they are going out on a date. With the influence of western television, modern courtship these days are going fast although it doesn't necessarily have the emotional baggage attached with immediately going to bed. It would take a lot longer time for Filipinos to trust each other to get to that point. It stems on the virtues rooted from the olden days.

Modern Filipina ladies are also decisive on their choices. Those who do not really want their suitors would not hesitate on letting them know of this fact. A refused suitor is called "basted".

These modern Filipinas are only a tip of the iceberg as most Filipinas especially the ones in the province still adheres to the traditional way of courtship. Most families still observes the rituals connected to panligaw, pamamanhikan or paghingi ng kamay, dowry etc.

Gone were the days of paninilbihan and haranas. These days, it is enough that a man shows up in a lady's house and bonds with the woman's family. He is not expected to chop wood or fetch water but at least show the girl's family that he is worthy enough of her love.

It is important though to note whether it be traditional or modern, to show your sincere intention of courting by introducing yourself to the family and impressing the girl's family in any way that you can.

## ONLINE

We know how hard it is to try and court a Filipina online, believe us, we've been there. Here are some helpful tips to go through with it:

1. Try to be as gentleman as possible. A Filipino male sets his best foot forward in courting a girl. That's how the game is played.
2. Keep communication lines open. Filipinas love to talk on email, on skype, etc. They just want to feel and hear you love them all the time. This is their way of bridging the distance. Filipinas have a lot of insecurities, if you forget to call them they will immediately feel bad or suspicious you're up to something. That's true to most Pinays. Constant communication helps.
3. Filipinas love surprises
4. Make good all of your promises. When you say you are coming on a certain date make sure you come on that date. Sincerity to Filipinos is measured not by saying what is right but by doing what is right.