

Unique Foods From the Philippines

By *emieval*

Each nation in this world has something unique to offer to foreigners visiting the country. One of these unique things is food.

This hub is all about the unique foods from the Philippines. I won't exactly call these foods 'exotic' (one of the websites I just read defined exotic as "disgusting" so I refrained from using this word). I called them unique because I believe they are not commonly found in other countries. As to them being exotic? You'll be the judge of that.

Lechon or Roasted Pig

The roasted pig is a staple whenever there are celebrations in my country. Birthdays, Christmas (especially here in Butuan, every Christmas party has a lechon), Fiestas, Weddings, etc., etc., the occasion will not be complete without the presence of the divine roasted pig. With its crispy skin and soft, delicious meat, you'll want to have a bite of this while it's still hot. The lechon is so in demand, especially during Christmastime, that you have to order more than two weeks in advance to make sure there's still an available supply of pig. Cebu is particularly famous for its delicious lechon, so famous that people from Manila will order from Cebu and have it brought by plane to Manila (the flight is about an hour) just for a special occasion. Really something, huh?

For those with high blood pressure or high cholesterol, be warned though. Eating lots of lechon is bad for your health (it's bad for everyone LOL). Just eat in moderation.



(Courtesy of: http://www.wowphilippines.com.ph/Special/kulinarya_f.asp)



The Lechon (Courtesy of <http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/tt/78c9d/>)



Dinuguan (Courtesy of <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinuguan>)



Chicken Adobo (Courtesy of <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adobo>)



Fish Kinilaw (Courtesy of <http://www.kinilaw.com/>)

Dinuguan (A Stew of Pig's Blood and Meat)

Another rare food, it is defined by <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinuguan> as a Filipino savory stew of blood and meat simmered in a rich, spicy gravy of pig blood, garlic, chili and vinegar. The word 'dinuguan' comes from the word 'dugo' meaning blood, specifically pig's blood. It can be served with white rice or rice cake (called 'puto'). Variations to this dish include adding coconut milk or putting in less blood (what is sometimes called 'tinumis', and is actually my favorite) or more chili or less chili. Dinuguan uses pork meat but may sometimes also use pork intestines and liver. Just make sure you brush your teeth after eating dinuguan, the black sauce may get stuck in between your teeth.

Filipino - Style Adobo

In general, adobo is not really rare in the Philippines. It can also be found in Latin America countries and even Spain. Filipino-style adobo is different in the sense that it was already around even before the Spanish people colonized my country in 1521. The Spanish people saw that our ancestors were cooking chicken or pork by stewing it in vinegar, hence, they called it adobo (Spanish for marinade or seasoning). There are two main ingredients for adobo, one is chicken (see picture), the other one is pork. Or you can combine the two, we call this sometimes CPA (chicken-pork adobo). Almost all Filipinos know how to cook adobo. If you have a Filipino friend, ask him or her about this dish. Chances are he or she not only knows about it but also knows how to cook it.

Kinilaw (Raw Fish in Vinegar)

Another one of my favorites, this one is found in almost every [restaurant](#) that you go to in Mindanao (especially in General Santos City in southern Mindanao). It is raw fish (tuna) 'cooked' in vinegar. You'll know if it's newly 'cooked' if the fish is still red. Kind of like the Japanese [sashimi](#), only the vinegar will eventually 'cook' the fish meat. Other ingredients (aside from vinegar) are ginger, kalamansi (the local lemon) juice, tiny chilis we call *siling labuyo*, coconut milk, dayap (a green lemon-like fruit, not sure about its English name) which gives it the rare sour taste and onions. You can also add grilled pork to make it a Sinuglaw - sinugbang baboy (grilled pork) and kinilaw.



Kalderetang Kambing (Courtesy of <http://en.wikipilipinas.org/index.php?title=Kaldereta>)



Bicol Express (Courtesy of <http://pinoycook.net/bicol-express/>)



Fried Frog (Courtesy of <http://www.pinoyunderground.com/showthread.php?t=89140>)



Adobong frog (Courtesy of <http://www.pinoyunderground.com/showthread.php?t=89140>)

Bagaybay

If there's anything about Filipinos when it comes to food, we know how to make use of everything. Bagaybay is the native term for tuna male eggs (I'll not show the picture for this one, but if you insist, I can always get one from the internet). It can be cooked adobo-style or grilled. Either way it is simply delicious and very tasty. The female version (sometimes called the Pinoy caviar) is called Bihod. Just make sure that you don't eat a lot of this food, it can wreak havoc with your blood pressure.

Kalderetang Kambing (Goat's Meat in Tomato Paste)

This is a very tasty dish. It is made with tomato paste, vinegar and pepper. Potatoes and carrots can also be added to make the dish more nutritious. The goat's meat is very soft and chewy. This is just one of the ways that we can cook goat's meat. In Ilocos, a province in northern Philippines, they can cook goat's meat in a variety of ways (grilled, fried, with soup, etc., etc.). But of all of them, kalderetang kambing is still the favorite.

Inihaw na Panga (Grilled Tuna Jaw)

This one is best served with soy sauce and kalamansi juice. It is very easy to prepare. Once done, it is also very tasty. You have to make sure that you turn the food around. The bottom part of the jaw (the one hidden behind the cartilage) is the tastiest part of this food.

Bicol Express

This viand can compete with the best spicy foods from the other countries. The hotter it is, the more delicious it tastes. This is made out of pork strips and siling labuyo and is cooked with coconut milk. I've tasted the 'original' bicol express and I could feel my whole mouth burning. My friend, who came from Bicol, did not even bat an eyelid while he was eating it. He said it still wasn't hot enough! Hot or not, it is a very tasty dish and it smells good, too.



Bibingka (Courtesy of <http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/tt/78c9d/>)



Halo halo inside a coconut shell (Courtesy of <http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/tt/78c9d/>)



Bico (Courtesy of <http://pinoyfoodblog.com/>)

Adobo or Pritong Palaka (Adobo or Fried Frog)

Okay, it's getting more exotic here. Don't worry, the frogs are cleaned and the skins are removed before cooking. I don't think I need to say anything more about this.

Balot (Fertilized Duck's Egg)

This one was tagged 'notorious' in another website and based on the feedback I heard, it is indeed notorious. The egg is incubated ('cooked') for 16 to 18 days before these are sold. It is better to eat the chick when the incubation period is like 17 days so that it is still inside a white coating (read: you will not see the actual chick, just close your eyes and eat). You can dip it in salt or vinegar before eating it. Balot is best served hot. The juice inside, sip it first before you eat the balot. If you can't stand the balot, then eat penoy, also a duck's egg but with no chick. Personally, I like balot better and it's more adventurous to eat one, don't you think?

Kakanins (Filipino Desserts)

Last but not the least, the **Filipino desserts**. There are a lot of them. There's the bibingka (local rice cake grilled with charcoal, with cheese on top), the bico (glutinous rice with coconut milk), the halo-halo (fruit cocktail with ice and milk, sometimes served inside a coconut shell) and the puto (rice cake oftentimes served with dinuguan). There are a lot more out there (maybe I'll create another hub for this one). You can have a party serving these desserts alone (bad for people with high blood pressure and diabetes) or you can eat one after a full meal. Either way, the Filipino kakanins are a joy to any food lover.

So there you have it. Food that we Filipinos are very proud of. These are the foods that our countrymen sorely miss when they go to work in other countries. If you ever come and visit my country, make sure to try these foods out. Happy eating!