

Philippine Birthday Traditions

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Birthdays are very special in our barrio, the Luzon Region of the Philippines. They are celebrated by the whole community, young and old, rich or poor. Even if you do not have much money, you are welcome to participate with a modest present, or none at all.

It is traditional for the whole barrio to help prepare the festivities.

We invite our local Priest to join in with us, and we always start with a prayer. It is our custom to offer thanks to God for a good year, and to look forward to the next.

As the party begins, the birthday person sits among the guests and receives gifts from them. No one places importance on the value of the gifts, or whether you can afford a gift at all. Everyone understands, and welcomes you to join in the celebration.

Next are games. One favorite is called "palayok." A clay pot is filled with candies, the children are blind folded, and they use a pole or stick to try and break the pot.

Another game is called "trip to Bethlehem" where the children line up around a set of chairs, which is one less than the number of children. Music plays, and when it stops, the children sit down. The child that does not have a chair is dropped out of the game. For the next round, one chair is removed and the game continues until only the winner is left.



Food is my favorite part of the birthday party! There are many traditional kinds served, including kakanin (rice cakes) and pancit (noodle dishes). In our barrio we often have pancit bihon or pancit palabok. Both dishes use thin noodles cooked with different sauces.

When cooking pancit, it is important not to break the noodles because they symbolize "long life," so everyone who eats them will enjoy a long life!

Ref.: <http://www.send-great-flowers.com/philippine-birthday-traditions.html>