Culture Ingested: Notes on the Indigenization of Philippine Food

N spite of his daily participation in its preparation and consumption, the Filipino is often hard put to say just what Philippine food is. In his home and restaurant menus are found dishes with vernacular names like laing and paklay, Spanish names like embutido and menudo, Chinese names like tokwa and bihon and even Chinese food with Spanish names, like camarón reelizado dorado con jamón — all companionably coexisting.

The reason for the confusion is that Philippine cuisine, dynamic as any live and growing phase of culture, has changed through history, absorbing influences, indigenizing, adjusting to new technology and tastes, and thus evolving.

Filipino food today as shaped by Philippine history and society
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must add critical and analytical tasting — a process difficult to standardize and imprison in formulae. For this preliminary exploration, I have used a method that combines examination (through the dish as done in the original culture and as extant in Filipino cooking) and then analysis to determine the culture change or pattern discernible from this.

Names. How then does one recognize these indigenized dishes on the Philippine table? Firstly by their names, since these were often borrowed along with the dish. Siopao, for example, is a Hokkien borrowing that suggests the cooking process, steaming, a steamed bread. Pancit, which comes from the Hokkien pian + i + si is still recognizably Chinese, although originally it did not necessarily mean a noodle dish. Gloria Chan-Yap tells us that it literally means "something that is conveniently cooked" and indicates the frying process. Since noodles are easy to prepare by frying, the word often, but not necessarily, means noodles. Pina in Hokkien simply means "plain boiled" and is used only in reference to the cooking of fish, the complete term in Hokkien being peq + sa + hi, the last morpheme meaning "fish." Chan-Yap cites this as an example of semantic "widening," since in Tagalog pina in isolation does mean fish, but can mean "boiled" when one says pina manok. However, the point remains: the names indicate the origin.

Adobe is the noun derived from adobo, the name of a stewed meat dish in Mexico, from where Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil says the Philippine adobo comes.4 In Spain, however, adobo is a pickling sauce made by cooking together olive oil, vinegar, garlic, thyme, laurel, oregano, paprika and salt. The Filipinos has thus given the name adobo to a particular dish of chicken or pork and chicken, and derived from it an adjective to describe other foods using the same or a similar cooking process (adobo-pintot). The term adobo has moved from the dish to the process of stewing in a spiced or flavored broth (e.g. "Ang itik sa Angono'y adobo na bago pritinpin.") thus using the basic meaning— to cook in a pickling sauce. And indeed Philippine adobo is adobo, but in condiments chosen by the native taste: vinegar and garlic, bayleaf and peppercorns, and more recently soy sauce, the Chinese contribution.

Some borrowings from Spanish are literal and do not undergo semantic shifts like the above: cocido, salpicón, croquetas. Some are only portions of the original name, e.g. carne mechada (meat with a lardoons), has become mechado; gallina rellenada has become relleno, relleno in Spanish being the forcemeat with which one stuffs the chicken. Especially interesting cases are dishes like pescado en salsa agria-salce and morisqueta testada, which in spite of their Spanish names are really Chinese. These are pucherías dishes, which in the Spanish period were translated into Spanish for printing on menus. The
dishes entered the native kitchen from the pencetria and so retain
the Spanish names. Some of these menus survive in small penceterias,
and although the years have corrupted the spelling in amusing ways, the
Spanish words cloak a Chinese dish which most Filipinos recognize as
Chinese, but now consider Filipino.

Sociological analysis of the names of food would thus reveal origin,
something of the nature of the change and also further information. For
example, the Chan-Yap study finds that loanwords are fewest in the
category of rice products and fowl, and suggests that this may be
because both rice and fowl had long been food sources for Filipinos, who
already had in their possession the culinary words appropriate for
describing referents in these categories. On the other hand, the fact
that there are many loanwords for meat (gojo, kanto, kustm, pasok, 
biyanka) suggests that the Tagalog people learned the habit of eating
some meat cuts, especially pork, from the Hokkien speakers and the
habit of eating beef from the Spanish, since many of the terms for beef
are Spanish (pansa y pollo, calera, lebo, solomillo).

Ingredients. The ingredients contained in the original dish, and
those in the local edition, are also clues to the process of indigeni-
zation. Noodles in Chinese cuisine, for example, are generally cooked
and flavored with meat and vegetables to flavor the noodles. Filipino
pencetia has local meats and vegetables — and a few other things not
found in Chinese cooking at all. Pancit Malabon, being the signature
noodle of a fishing town, has squid and oysters and salted eggs, which
individually may conceivably be found in a Chinese dish, but not in
that combination. Pancit Malabon has crumbled oyster of rice flour, since
its home base, Bulacan, is rice-growing country; pancit palabok has
flaked tinapa and crumbled chicharon. The tinapa is from the native
cuisine (stewing being one of the ways of preserving food in the days
before refrigeration), and chicharon is from the Spanish, but they are
combined in a dish of Chinese origin. A special example of adaptation
through ingredients is pancit bolo, in which flour noodles are replaced by
stripes of young coconut and treated like noodles.

Bringhe is generally made in Spain with chicken or rabbit, with rice and
seasoning, especially saffron. Bringhe does use chicken, but the rice is
malagkit and the sauce is coconut milk, to which is added a duck called
angge, which turns the rice green instead of saffron yellow. Paella was
created from the Spanish country landscape — the rabbit scavenging
by the chicken bought from a farmer, the saffron which is the most
expensive spice in the world, and grows in Spain. Eating paella, there-
fore, is ingesting the Spanish landscape. Eating bringhe, however, is
ingesting the Philippine landscape — the chicken running around on
the farm, the coconut from a nearby tree, and the malagkit for fiesta

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Cakes. This is a clear example of indigenization through a change of
substance, spirit and name.

The Cooking Process. This is probably the avian in which many a
cultural change is tried and given a Philippine shape. We have
already mentioned adobo, in which stewing with spices become stewing
in vinegar, garlic, pepper and bay leaf, in the process making sure that
the dish would keep long without reed of refrigeration and enduring it
with that slight sourness that is a favored Philippine flavor.

Pag-gigisa, or sauteing, is a technique foreign to the indigenous
cuisine, which is mostly boiled, roasted, or steamed (halo- balloon). It
May have been learned from the Chinese stir-frying, in which food cut up
in small pieces is moved quickly around in a little oil/bard. But certainly
most of it was learned from the Spanish (the terms gisad/gisado, de-
vised from the Spanish gisado, or cooked dish, indicate that), who
sauté in olive oil with perhaps an onion and a garlic clove.

The Filipino sauteing, however, has become set into a pattern:
heat the oil; sauté the garlic till golden brown; add the onions and
cour saute till soft and transparent; add the sliced tomatoes and saute till
cooked, and then add adobo (the principal flavoring ingredients,
usually shrimp and/or pork) — and then add whatever else is being
cooked, like beans for gisadang sitio. Through the years it has become
a standard formula, and many cooks say that the secret of good cooking
is in the pace and contents of the gisado. One must know exactly when
the next item should be added, and it is also said of good cooks that
their pag-gigisa can make any lone vegetable or leftover taste good.

What we have here is a particular indigenizing process dis-
covered and set through the years. The Filipino gisado has to
have that garlic, onion, tomato and adobo base, and this preliminary
process can filipinize anything else — cauliflower, long beans, fish, scrambled
eggs, noodles, paella (restaurateur and chef Lenny Guerrero says that is the
secret of her paella), and even canned mackerel from Japan (collo-
quially called saradinas). The adobo may be optional, but not the garlic,
onions and tomatoes; while in Spanish cuisine a gisado may have one or
two of the above, but not usually all three. The Filipino gisado is
indeed an indigenizing process all by itself.

Flavoring. If the gisado tones the food to Filipino tastes, even
more so do the dipping sauces called siomai and the standard table
sauces like bagoong and patis. Bagoong and patis are used not only to
salt food, but also to give the food an acceptable Filipino taste. Tales
have been told of Filipino travellers and honeymooners venturing into
alien cuisines armed with bottles of patis. No matter how strange or
different the food, the patis gives it Filipino flavor, so that the diner's
culture-bound taste buds can relate to it.

What really adjusts the food to the individual and his learned
food values, and adapts it to the particular regional, individual culture
of the diner, is the sausazan. Chinese food does not have this galaxy of flavor-adjusters: vinegar and garlic; kalasan; soy sauce, patis and garlic; bagoong, tomatoes and onions; green mango or kamyas with tomatoes and onions; chicarons, bagoong and coriander leaf; bagoong Balayan and kalaman; sinamak — vinegar in which chillis, garlic and pepper are marinated; native pear onions (silayas Tagalog) and vinegar (sukang lechon); miso (soy bean cake) sautéd in garlic, onions and tomatoes; sliced fresh tomatoes (for fish); sliced pala (tunny, tar mangoes); crushed tamarind, etc. etc. — and row, of course, ketchup and Worcestershire sauce as well.

What does this mean, and why is the Filipino diner allowed to tamper with his food in such profligate, extravagant ways? When he does, the chef in the kitchen will not threaten murder or suicide, because it is understood that the diner can take part in the preparation of the dish by using his sausazan. I read this as evidence of the sense of community of the Filipinos, the bond between all cooks and their clients, the back stage crew and the guys on stage, the farmer and the neighbors and relatives who form his support network. It is like plowing a field or moving a house bayanan style; it is like a whole town staging a komedyang, when even the director is not the absolute dictator, hamanas and elders having a large say in product and process.

The sausazan is itself another indigenizing process. The Filipino conquers the foreign taste and culture with an arm of sausazan, insists on participation and involvement, accepts nothing passively, but takes active part in the creation of his food. The sausazan is not dish-specific, not assigned to particular recipes, although there are some traditional partners. This is indeed an arsenal with which to meet and subdue the foreign invader, and render him/it acceptable to the native culture. It indicates an ethos completely different from that prevailing in France, where the chef is the master creator and has sole authority over the dish. For the diner to tamper with it is discourtesy and insult. In the Philippine experience, the diner cooperates and participates, and the creation is communal. The sausazan thus transforms not only the taste, but also the relationship behind the experience.

Social Position. Still another element that must be examined in the process of indigenization is the social position given the dish in the cross-cultural transfer. In China, for example, siomai and siopao are food of everyday, eaten at breakfast, or at tea-time, not generally at festivals or for main meals. Where do we find them in the Philippine menu? At merienda, in homes, schools, the streets; not usually at principal or festive meals either. These foods, as well as most of Chinese cuisine, entered Philippine culture at "ground-level," at the level of everyday food, and found their final place there, among the balanit of the native culture. Since the ingredients and the nature of these dishes were found compatible with the budget of that level, and with the other accompaniments (such as tea, coffee and salabat), the social rank in which indigenization ensconced it in Philippine cuisine was equivalent to that which it held in China. The porridge (gulay) with chicken, fish or pork of Chinese breakfasts and late-night suppers is now the arroz caldo (note the change of name and language) and goto of Philippine meriendas and late-night snacks. The everyday noodles of China are also ordinary in the Philippines — mami, lechon, pancit bihon — although with special ingredients they can become fiesta food, just as there are special noodles in China.

The Spanish food absorbed into the culture, however, has acquired a high social position and is located in the level of special, or festive food. Cocido, in Spain, is a simple dish in which one finds a meat (beef or lamb), and a piece of blood sausage (morcilla), salt pork (tocino), and ham — items found hanging in almost every Spanish kitchen — cooked with garbanzos and a bit of cabbage. It is daily food, ordinary, a pot thrown together, a one-dish meal that is not special.

In the Philippines, however, since the ham and sausages are rare in the native kitchen and, being imported, are expensive, the dish has ascended the social ladder to become special food, for Christmas and family reunions. When set against the background of the indigenous fish-and-vegetable cuisine, this is indeed a rare and expensive dish. Moreover, coming from the alien, dominant culture, it acquires a cachet of "class" and a position in the cuisine of the elite. It would, quite simply, be beyond the ordinary man's budget.

Paella has had an even more noticeable change in social position. Originally a dish cooked in the field in Spain, the paella set on stones over a wood fire, the ingredients whatever could be conveniently found in the field (a rabbit, a chicken), in the Philippines it has become the prime fiesta food. Because it is Spanish and special, it is usually enriched with pork, chicken, crabs, clams, prawns and Spanish sausages (rare then, expensive now). The wine added to it in Spain is generally table wine, which is drunk like water; while cooking with wine in the Philippines means adding something rarefied and expensive. Thus the social transformation of paella has much to say about the original (colonizer) and receiving (colonized) cultures, as well as about colonization and the process of culture change.

We thus note that the Chinese food now found in homes, mercerendas, school canteens, cheap restaurants and the streets, came in from traders and not from conquerors. The food of the conquerors, because of both the source and the sheer cost, can now be found on fiesta tables, on the dining tables of the elite, and in expensive restaurants, where it is billed as Spanish and not Filipino food. The Nielsen Tower restaurant in Makati offers this "ante-bellum Philippine food" in a menu written in Spanish.
The Native Cuisine. Having examined the names, ingredients, cooking methods, means for flavor adjustment and social position of foreign food borrowed, adapted and indigenous by the Filipino, let us now take a look at the indigenous cuisine. This was the standard for indigization — taking the process to mean that by which the foreign food is made compatible with the native cuisine.

If the foreign-influenced food in the culture has Chinese, Spanish, Mexican and, in Mindanao, Arab and Indian roots, it would follow that the indigenous cuisine would be all the rest that is in the food lexicon. Here would belong the sour stewed (singgang, pakstuv), steamed (pinasiningaw, halabos), roasted (initiaw) and boiled (tinog, a) — the terminology, we note, exists in the vernacular — dishes we still have in the present. The ingredients for these are culled from the landscape: fish and shellfish from the seas, rivers, brooks, streams, flooded rice fields; the flesh of domesticated animals like pig and chicken and yes, dog and carabaos, and that of undomesticated (wild) animals like usa (deer), bijay damo (wild boar), musang (wildcat), baguas (iguana), paniqui (fruit bat); other edible creatures like kaniru (mole cricket), salalabang (June beetle) and locusts; and of course the leaves, bulbs, tendrils, seeds and fruits of the ever-green Philippine landscape.

The cooking methods probably evolved from the freshness, proximity and availability of the ingredients. Native wisdom shows that the best way to treat these is to cook them very little, or not at all (kisniluw). The cuisine did not evolve sauces because there was no need to disguise flavors giving bad or slightly off (one function of sauces and spices in Europe). Sour cooking, smoking and pickling evolved because there was need to preserve without refrigeration.

This native cuisine is also subject to the flavoring provided by sauces like patis and bagoong, and the sambal, because this is where the communal creation of food started, in the agricultural lifestyle of the tribal communities of the pre-Hispanic Filipino. In this cuisine are expressed the flavors of the native tongue and taste. It is to this standard that the foreign foods are compared, and to which they are adjusted in budget, taste and economic level. This is quite naturally the cuisine in the heartland of the Filipino, the one he longs for when he is away, the one he finds comforting. It is part of his ethos.

This is a cuisine linked and allied to those of the rest of Southeast Asia. With the rest, it shares rice as a staple food — rice treated not only as cereal, but as background for all other tastes, and thus determinant of other tastes — rice as ritual food, rice not just as extend but as highly valued taste and aroma. With the rest it also shares the extensive and varied uses of coconut — water, flesh, milk, heart of palm. There is an easily perceptible similarity between singgang and all the sour broths of the region, like the Thai tom-yam, and there is a common use of fermented sauces, like bagoong (trassi in Indonesia, blachan in Malaysia, kapi in Thailand, mam tom in Vietnam) and patis (nam pla in Thailand, nuoc mam in Vietnam, patis in Indonesia).

This native cuisine is, amazingly, hardly changed in nature or spirit. Singgang is still sowed with sour fruits and leaves from the Philippine landscape. It is still as flexible, friendly to any kind of fish, meat or vegetable, adjustable to any kind of budget or circumstance. What has become available to singgang, however, is new technology. Sour broth from tamarind can now be had in an instant "add-water-only" package, which Filipinos consider good for emergencies and for Filipinos in the US, but which housewives here scorn to use because the fresh ingredients are available and of better value, even if less convenient.

Pakstuv and iniaw are still cooked in the same way, even though the need for coal fires and preservation in vinegar is no longer present in houses with gas and electric stoves, and refrigerators. When the Filipino entertains family or intimate friends, or when he wants to eat in relaxed familiarity — with his hands — he returns to this native cuisine and tries to have it in as pristine a form as possible. Fish are caught in ponds or pens and roasted on the spot; restaurants have opened on the Buley Pen bayshore and feature lake fish; milkfish is stuffed with onions and tomatoes and roasted over coals in the yard, with the cook fanning away.

The native cuisine proved itself strong and resistant to "infratization" with the foreign invaders. The original dishes retained their ingredients, cooking methods and spirit. Foreign dishes have been Filipinized, but Philippine dishes have not been Sinicized or Hispanized. The cultural interaction has been one of borrowing whole dishes, then adapting and indigenizing them, rather than borrowing elements to impose on native dishes. The result is a cuisine enriched rather than bastardized, its integrity kept, its dynamism that of judicious response to change.

Could this perhaps serve as an analogue with which to understand indigization in language, in theatre and in other areas of Philippine culture? and the pattern cannot be identical in all areas. Perhaps in some the borrowed elements have overwhelmed the native forces. But it is important to realize that in food, the most popular form of popular culture, created by the mass in their daily activity, in an act of unconscious transformation and creation, this is what happened.

The native culture stood firm and "kept the faith," borrowing only technology (freezers, pressure cookers, instant flavorings) when necessary, but not changing in essence. Foreign culture was tried, examined, adjusted and then used as the base for creation within the Philippine lifestyle. The fact that borrowed Spanish culture came to have a high
place in social estimation and regard is eloquent about colonization and
the attitudes it engenders in the colonized. It also suggests that the
colonial attitude (mentality) may not have come about only because of
conquest but because of such a pragmatic dimension as cost, budget,
economics. (Chinese food is defiantly within reach; the ingredients of
Spanish food are not.) Only the native elite, not the masses, could
afford the colonizer's lifestyle, and so the former become colonized not
only by the desire to emulate prestige and class, but through their
wealth.

These preliminary notes on the indigenization of food suggest
further research on the linguistic factor, the names not only of food, but
of cooking implements and processes; and on the nature of all the
culinary sources, and the change in them through indigenization.
What, for example, do the carajay, sianse and sizing indicate about
native and adapted food? The transformation of the Cantonese break-
fast, rice porridge, into the goto and arroz caldo of the Philippine
merienda — what does it say?

Research should also be extended to such related subjects as the
service of food, food etiquette and ways, the non-nutritional functions of
food (ritual, medicinal, social), and the further functions of food as
language (what are all the many messages it bears?).

We have suggested how eating is the ingestion of culture. Deeper
exploration is called for. When the Filipino adapted paella and
pascuit, pug-gigias and pressure-cooking, what effect did that have on
him, on his cultural culture and on the future of the native culture?

Food, obviously, is not only for eating. DGF

NOTES

1. cf. Doreen G. Fernandez, "Food and the Filipino," in Philippine
World View, Virgilia G. Enriquez, ed. (Singapore: Institute of
Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 20-44; and "Why Sinigang?" in
The Culinary Culture of the Philippines, Gilda Cordero-Fernando,

2. Naomichi Ishige, "What is Dietary Culture?" Alcomunicaciones,
No. 9, March-April 1981, pp. 1-5.

3. Gloria Chan-Yap, "Hokkien Chinese Influence on Tagalog Coo-

4. Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, "Filipino Food," in A Question of Iden-

5. "Duck cooked the Angono way is stewed in a pickling liquid be-
fore frying.


GLOSSARY

Achara — pickled fruits or vegetables
Adobo — pork and/or chicken stewed in vinegar, garlic, bay leaves and
peppercorns
Adobong pusit — squid cooked adobo style
Adobo sa gata — adobo with coconut milk
Alac/Alak — [arack] generic term for alcoholic drink of any kind
Alalay — carefulness in doing something; care in holding or carrying
something; colloquially, an aide or assistant
Alamang — tiny shrimps, often made into a salty paste called bagoong
Alibangbang — a small stocky tree, the young leaves of which are used
in souring or flavoring meat or fish
Aminad — a dry measure
Alugbate — a succulent, herbaceous vine called "Malabar Night
Shade" or Ceylon Spinach
Ampalaya — (Momordica Balsamina) bitter gourd, a bitter melon
Ampaw-p Amelia — cakes made of dried pimiento (pounded rice grains)
Ange — bark used for flavoring rice which colors it green
Anghang — pepperiness; chilli hotness in food; spiciness
Ani — the smell of burning rice
Angkak — a specially treated cereal used for seasoning, particularly
for fish and shrimps
Apatap — silver sea bass
Apan-apan — [Ilango] vegetables cooked with bagoong
Arroz caldo — chicken and rice gruel flavored with ginger
Arroz a la Valenciana — rice and chicken dish
Asyungin — silver perch
Babayan — native high priest
Baboy damo — wild boar; wild pig
Bagoong — small fish or shrimps preserved in brine, usually used as
sauce
Bagoong Balayan — a bagoong made of small fish, for which the town
of Balayan, Batangas is known
Bahique — [bahag] loin cloth; g-string; breechcloth
Bahok — [bahog] eating rice with broth; the act of mixing broth or other liquid with cooked rice
Balat — fertilized ducks’ eggs that have already developed embryos and are boiled and eaten with salt
Banak — [banac] mullet
Bangus/Bangplos — (Chanos-Chanos) milkfish
Batuan — a sour fruit about 2 cm. in diameter, with an acidic, juicy, edible pulp around a large seed; also used for souring broth
Bayanihan — cooperative endeavor or labor, especially in a community project
Bayawak — iguana; a big lizard
Baye-baye — ilango rice cake
Bayo — to pound rice with pestle and mortar
Bibingka — a rice cake cooked with fire under and over it
Bigas — unhusked and milled rice; bulled rice grains
Bihon — rice noodles
Biko — a cake of sweetened glutinous rice (malagkit) cooked in coconut milk (gata) and sometimes embellished with latik (toasted coconut)
Bilo-bilo — small steamed rice cakes; small balls of dough made from glutinous rice, used especially in cooking ginataan
Binagoongang baboy — pork cooked in bagaoq
Binakol — a boiled chicken dish formerly cooked in a length of bamboo or in a coconut, usually with strips of young coconut
Bisita — visitor; outsider making a professional visit or call
Biya — the common name for all species of goby [Family Gobiidae]
Biyaya ng lupa — the earth’s bounty
Blachan — Malaysian shrimp paste similar to bagaoq
Berrachos — small Spanish cakes soaked in wine
Brazo — a dessert of Spanish origin; a roll of meringue filled with a butter sauce
Brazo de la Reina — the above, but filled or sprinkled with nuts
Bringhe — native dish derived from Spanish pata la, of rice, chicken and coconut milk
Broas — [brasas] ladyfingers
Bugas — Visayan term for rice
Buko — young coconut fruit
Buro — fish or meat preserved in brine or salt; pickled green fruits; fish or shrimp fermented with rice
Bunong dalag — fermented mudfish
Busa — to toast or cook without lard
Caban — [kaban] a dry measure equivalent to 75 liters or 5 gantas
Cadera — sirloin; side of beef
Callos — Sp. tripe
Camaro rebozado dorado con hamon — butter-fried shrimp with a piece of ham
Canoa — sweet potato
Capiz — [kapis] placuna shell; commonly used in making lampshades and window panes. (The sea creature within is edible.)
Carajay — [karahay] large frying pan Syn. kawali
Carne mechada — [Spanish] a dish of beef with lardoons
Carta — letter
Castillo — a mounted “castle” of pastry, often made of glazed cream puffs
Cavarasan — liquor made from the honey of bees
Chicharon — [silisaron] crisp, fried pork rind; cracklings
Chorizo de Bilbao — Sp. sausage usually used in such dishes as paella, cocido, puchero
Chupa — smallest standard measure for rice
Cocido — [kasuido] Spanish stew of meat, vegetables and chickpeas
Compadrazgo — godfather system
Copcop — [kupkep] act of keeping or protecting someone needing help or care, as a hen shelters chicks under her wings
Cronicas — histories or reports of missionary work
Croquetas — croquettes
Dacot — [dakotto] a handful of rice; amount or quantity taken in one scoop
Dacotan — [dakotan] to scoop up handfuls of rice
Dahong bawang — garlic leaves used as green vegetable or made into pickles
Dahing — fish split longitudinally down the back, salted and dried in the sun
Dalaq — a species of fresh-water mudfish; murrel
Damampit — an asteraceous maritime shrub called “samphire,” usually pickled
Dapog — transplanting rice seedlings; fire in an open space in which firewood is used
Darac — husk left after the rice is milled; powdered or pulverized rice bran
Dayami — rice straw
Dedicatoria — dedication, e.g. in a book
Dedos — pill candy wrapped in lampia wrapper
Dicionario — Sp. dictionary
Dilaw — a ginger-like plant called turmeric, the root of which is used as condiment
Dimangnaq — a dish of animal entrails and blood, seasoned with vinegar, garlic, salt, etc.
Dulang — a kind of low dining table
Embudo — Sp. a meat roll
Ensaimada — [ensaymada] Sp. sweet roll, usually buttered, dusted with sugar and sometimes with cheese
Ensala — Sp. salad
Entablo — stage; speaker's platform or stand
Espasol — [espasol] a sweetmeat made from the flour of glutinous rice (malaykit)
Fina — Spanish rice measure
Gabang — a unit of dry measure
Gabi — a species of tuber also called “taro”
Gachas — watery mass; porridge, mash, pap
Galantina — stuffed chicken, sliced and served cold
Galapong — rice flour
Galina rellenada — deboned stuffed chicken
Gulinggong — round scad
Garbanzoe — [garbanzoe; garabanso] chick-pea
Gata — the juice squeezed from grated coconut meat; coconut milk
Gilib — [gilib] powdery substance covering husks of rice, straw and blades of some grasses, that usually causes irritation or itchiness on the skin
Ginataang gulay — vegetables cooked in or with coconut milk
Ginisang ampalaya — sauteed bitter gourd
Ginisang sitaw — sauteed stringbeans
Gisa/Gisado — derived from Spanish guisar; to saute; the act or manner of sauteing
Golesinas — little cookies, pastries, sweetmeats
Goto — rice porridge with tripe
Galat — plant grown for food; green vegetables
Habhab — to eat from a container
Halabos — steamed
Halabos na hapon — steamed shrimps
Hal-hal — [hal-hal] refreshment made up of a mixture of beans, corn, jackfruit, banana slices, jelly, etc. with sugar, milk, shaved ice or ice cream
Helado — frozen; something stored on ice
Hermano — literally, brother; also, the sponsor of a fiesta
Hindi ka naman hikta — "You are not a guest"
Hindi iban tao — one of us
Hapton sa gata — shrimp cooked in or with coconut milk
Hitot — fresh-water catfish
Ibang tao — idiom for “outsider”
Igud — coconut rubber crab
Ilustrado — a learned, educated, cultured man
Indio — name given by the Spanish colonizers to the native of the Philippines
Inilaw — broiled; roasted
Inilaw na tulingan — broiled big-eyed tuna
Inilaw sa uling — broiled over charcoal

Jamon China — Chinese ham
Kakang gata — thick coconut milk, usually the first juice extracted from grated coconut meat. Syn. unang gata
Kakanin — sweetmeats; tidbits
Kalabasa — squash plant; the fleshy fruit of this plant eaten as vegetable
Kalabaw — carabaos; with reference to mango, the largest variety
Kalamansi — a spiny citrus tree that bears small spherical acidic fruit, used in seasoning food and for making a juice preparation like lemonade
Kamaro/Kamaru — mole cricket
Kamayan — act of eating with bare hands, often referring to a group of persons eating together
Kamias — [kamias] a small tree, the fruits of which are acidic, edible and commonly used as condiment in cooking native stew (sinigang)
Kamoteng kahoy — cassava; manioc, a tropical plant with edible starchy roots
Kamot — beef flank meat; dish of flank meat stewed with radish
Kandali — [kandali] sea catfish (Family Ariidae)
Canin/Canin — cooked or boiled rice. Syn. sinaging
Kaan — sugar palm tree; the fruit of this palm, the seeds of which are usually made into sweetmeats
Kari-Kari/Kare-Kare — a stew of oxtail, calf’s foot and/or tripe, with vegetables and the broth slightly thickened with ground rice and peanuts
 Kasereola — casseroles; saucepan; stewpan
Kasim — sourish taste as of food beginning to have slight fermentation
Kasubha — a plant, the dried stigma of which are used for coloring and flavoring food; a kind of saffron
Katuray — a semi-wild tree the white flowers of which are eaten raw or steamed; the young pods are also edible
Keklam — [kikiam] Chinese meat roll
Kiliw/Kinilaw — a dish similar to ceviche, made by marinating uncooked fish or shrimps in vinegar and seasoning with salt, black pepper, etc., e.g. kilawing dilis, hapon, tanguiran (sa gata — with coconut milk)
Kinechay — Chinese celery
Kinunot na pating — (baby) shark cooked in coconut milk
Kiping — edible, bright-colored leaf-shaped thin wafers used as decoration at the Lucban and other Quezon Maytime fiestas
Komedya — a folk drama form also called Moro-Moro
Kulitis — [kulitis/kolitis] an edible common weed; amaranth (Amaranthus viridis Linnaeus), also called native spinach
Kutasil — a kind of native cake made of rice flour, similar to puto but
more sticky and somewhat gelatinous
Laing — Bicol dish made of the stalks and leaves of gabi (taro plant) cooked in coconut milk and chilies
Lambanog — native wine distilled from coconut palm juice
Langkawas — an aromatic, ginger-like root
Lattik — residuum of coconut milk after extracting oil by boiling; sweet preparation made from coconut milk used as sauce for sambal
Leche flan — [lecheplan] cream; caramel; milk custard; usually with a caramelized syrup
Lechon — [lechon] roast pig with lemon grass or tamarind leaf stuffing
Lengua estufada — stewed ox tongue
Lempo — pork belly
Lihiya — [lihiya] lye. Syn. sosso
Logao/Lugaw — rice cooked soft and wet as a gruel
Lomi — flat noodles sauteed with meat and vegetables, served with broth
Lomo — loin
Losong/Lusong — mortar
Losulo — [lowalu, liwalo] climbing perch. Syn. mrtiniko
Lumahan — striped mackerel; Japanese mackerel
Lambalamba — dolphin
Lumpia — spring roll; a dish made of shrimp, meat and/or vegetables wrapped or rolled up in a thin flour wrapper, eaten fresh or fried
Lumpling — shed: the pith or heart of a palm wrapped in a lumpia wrapper
Maasalat — salty; containing salt
Manggo — having the odor of fermented milk
Maasin — sour; rancid, spoiled by fermentation
Maaskad — having a bitterish or acid taste
Macapuno — the fruit of a species of coconut tree which is filled (mao) with flesh instead of coconut water, and is usually made into sweets
Magsanaya — a variety of rice favored in Western Visayas
Maja Blanca — a kind of rice or corn pudding
Malabo — turbid or muddy as water; unclear; indistinct
Malabo — spongy in consistency as fruits or tubers
Malacapas — a species of fish known as spoiled mojarra
Malagkit — sticky; also glutinous rice
Malangas — a species of fish
Malangas — [malangas] fishy; having a fishy taste or smell
Malinamnam — delicious; very tasty or savory; creamy and tender quality of taste and texture associated with something fresh
Maliputo — cavallo fish thriving in Taal Lake
Malunggay — a small tree, the young leaves, flowers and pods of which are commonly used as vegetables; horse-tailish plant

Mamalit — tassel fish; four-fingered threadfin
Mami — a dish of Chinese origin consisting principally of noodles with condiments and broth
Manamisamis — on the sweet side
Mapi — bitter
Mapakla — acid in taste, as of a young guava fruit or banana
Marquesetas — a type of biscuit
Matamis — sweet; having the taste of sugar
Mechado — Sp. a dish of meat with lardoons
Medio noche — midnight repast; the midnight meal traditionally taken on Christmas eve
Merenderos — restaurants that sell snacks
Miki — [nudel] Chinese noodles made from wheat flour and usually used in making pancit; sold fresh, not dried
Miso de Gallo — Midnight mass; dawn masses held for nine consecutive days before Christmas
Miso — soybean cake; boiled bean mash used as ingredient in sauteing or in making sauce for pina
Morcella — blood sausage
Morcon — a large meat roll
Morisqueta tintada — fried rice
Musang — wild or mountain cat; civet cat
Nakakakihai — shameful; disgraceful
Nangka — [langka] jackfruit
Nilaga — [linaga] meat stew; something boiled, like corn, banana, esp. sabi
Ninong — a male sponsor at a wedding, baptism or confirmation; godfather
Niuc mam — Vietnamese fish sauce similar to patis
Okay — [hukoy] a patty or cake of grated vegetables with or without pork or shrimp; deep-fried in lard or oil
Olam/Ulam — victuals like fish, meat, vegetables eaten with boiled rice
Paella — Spanish dish with rice, seafood, sausages, meat, vegetables
Paellera — shallow iron pan in which paella is cooked
Pag-gilipas — sauteing
Palo — tiny, tart mangoes
Pako — edible fern
Paksiw — a dish of fish or meat cooked in vinegar with salt, ginger and garlic
Paksiw na banak — mullet cooked in vinegar (above)
Palaspa — palm leaves woven into various shapes and figures and taken to the church on Palm Sunday for blessing
Palay — unhusked rice grain
Palitaw — small cakes made from the starch of glutinous rice and eaten
Puto — generic term for steamed rice cakes
Puto bumbong — a chewy rice cake made from the glutinous rice called 
pirutong, molded and steamed in a small bamboo segment and eaten with sugar and grated coconut
Putong lisong — a white anise-flavored rice cake
Putong Polo — little round rice cakes from Polo, Bulacan
Putong sulu — a rice flour cake molded and steamed in a small bamboo tube
Putas — completely full or filled up, as a bag or sack
Qina — [kiss] to mix corn, other grains, or shredded kamote with rice before steaming
Quartillo — a dry measure equivalent to one-half of a ganta or 1.5 liters
Rosquetas — a type of biscuit
Relleno — stuffed chicken, fish, or turkey, etc.
Sabalo — a large milkfish from the sea off and not from the fishpond
Sahog — principal flavoring ingredients
Salabat — ginger ale or ginger tea
Salagubang — June beetle; June bug
Salop — a cubic receptacle for measuring grains equal to three liters, or gantas
Salpicón — tenderloin tips sauteed in oil and garlic
Saluyot — an erect, branched, annual herb, the tops of which are eaten as vegetables, especially by Ilocanos
Sampaloc — [Tagalog] tamarind
Sangag/busa — to toast or fry rice; to roast popcorn, coffee, etc.
Sangke — star anise
Sapsap — a species of slipmouth (fish)
Sardinas — canned sardines; also colloquial for canned mackerel from Japan
Sawsawan — dipping sauce usually mixed by the diner himself at the table to go with whatever he is about to eat
Sayaote — miriton pear; a light green, oval fruit that becomes soft and bland when cooked
Sinanse — [iseyarse] turner; a kitchen utensil used for turning food that is being fried
Sibuyas Tagalog — native pearl onions; scallions
Sinaing — boiled rice prepared for every meal; rice that is being cooked or boiled still in the pot; also fish cooked in a little water and salt
Sinamak/Sinaamac — vinegar in which chilis, garlic and pepper are marinated
Singkamas — tuberous root, large, white-fleshed and turnip-shaped, eaten raw as a fruit or cooked as a vegetable; a variety of turnip
Sinalgang — a dish of pork, beef, shrimp, or fish and vegetables in a broth seasoned with acidic fruits
Sisigang na baboy — pork in a sour broth
Sisigang na bangus — milkfish in a sour broth
Sisigal — Chinese steamed dumpling
Sisigao — steamed stuffed Chinese bun
Solomillo — Sp. tenderloin
Surieta sa ganapanera — ice cream made in an old-fashioned grinder
Sotanghon — translucent noodles made from mung beans
Suka — vinegar
Sukang Iloco — palm vinegar from the Ilocos region
Suman — a native delicacy made of glutinous rice or cassava flour, wrapped in banana or palm leaves
Suman buho/buhok — a variety of suman made in Cebu
Suspiros — spun-sugar candy
Tapa — fat; the white or yellow oily substance in the body of animals; lard; the inner fat of hogs
Tablos — [tabyos] a species of tiny goby found in Lake Buhi in the Bicol region
Talangka — a species of small crab. Syn. klatang
Talboso ng ampalaya — tendrils of the bitter melon or bitter gourd used as vegetable
Talinum — a fleshy herb used as substitute for spinach
Talong — eggplant
Talunang manok — "defeated cock"; a dish made from a rooster defeated in a cockfight
Tamales — rice cake derived from Mexican tamale
Tamanlo — edible woodworm
Tanduay — nipa wine
Tanglad — lemon grass or citronella; sweetgrass; gingergrass
Tanglingue/Tanglai — Spanish mackerel
Tap — dried meat slices, e.g. pork, beef, venison, wild boar
Tinapa — fish dried by smoking; smoked fish
Tinapal/Tinapay — bread
Tinola — a dish of boiled chicken, green papaya, common gourd and broth, flavored with ginger and peppercorn
Tinubong — rice cake cooked in a bamboo tube; a Christmas food of Vigan, Ilocos Sur
Tocino — salt pork, bacon
Tocino del Cielo — tiny sweet custards in syrup
Tokwa — soybean curd
Tomum — Thai sour soup
Torta Imperial — Spanish torte; a multi-layered cake
Tuyo — soy sauce
Trassi — Indonesian salted shrimp paste, like bayong
Tuba — the fresh sweet juice obtained from nipa or buri palm by cutting the top; this juice is usually drunk fresh, and also made into wine or vinegar

Glossary
Tulingan — big-eyed tuna
Tulya — tiny fresh-water clams; a species of small bivalves
Tumpek — a small mound, used as a unit for selling fish or vegetables, shrimps, grain, etc.
Turo-turo — a practice in small local restaurants or eateries in which customers point at what they want; a way of ordering cooked food from the counter display
Turron de Almendras — Sp. almond torte
Tutong — the crusty part of boiled rice left sticking to the bottom of the cooking pot
Tuyo — whole, dried, salted fish
Ube — purple yam, usually made into sweets
Ubud — [ubod] pith or heart of a palm, especially coconut, eaten raw as a salad or cooked
Ulang — large variety of fresh-water crayfish
Upo — bottle-gourd
Usa — deer
Ulang na loob — debt of gratitude; favor
Vocalizar — Sp. dictionary
Walang talong, malah ang gabi? kangkong na lang! — There's no eggplant available, gabi is expensive? Kangkong will do!
Wallis tingtling — a stiff broom made from the ribs of coconut leaves
Wansoy — coriander leaves used as seasoning