



PancitMalabon: Malabon Heritage

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Abstract: Malabon City is known for its famous Pancit Malabon. It bears the culture of their citizens, not only with them but for every Filipinos. The purpose of this study is to show how Pancit Malabon defined the culture of their citizens and how it acquires its popularity. This study aims to know the importance of Pancit Malabon as part of urban heritage. Using ethnography, we were able to trace one of the first and original inventors of Pancit Malabon. We conducted a face-to-face interview with the inventor's family. From generation to generation, Pancit Malabon can already be considered as their heritage and has contributed a lot in food tourism. It has also influenced the gastronomic culture of the people living in Malabon City. Pancit Malabon is not only a food everyone can eat but it is also a heritage every Malabonano can be proud of.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to show how Pancit Malabon define the culture of their citizens and how it acquires its popularity. This study aims to know the importance of Pancit Malabon as part of urban heritage.

1.2 Pancit Malabon as a dish

Pancit Malabon is a noodle dish that originated in Malabon, Metro Manila. This dish is like a *Pancit Palabok*, the difference is the seafood toppings and the traditional tough and thick rice noodles that distinguishes this dish (VanjoMerano, 2014). The fish sauce, crab fat and annatto seeds, are the recipes that make the dish flavored and colored. It has different seafood items as well as crushed pork or known as chicharon and sliced hard boiled eggs. The seafood ingredients of Pancit Malabon are shrimp, smoked fish or Tinapa Flakes, and squid. Oyster or 'talaba' and Mussels or 'tahong' can also be used. Manufactured from Bulacan factories, where the current supplies still



comes, the noodles were delivered to pandahas or small eating sheds on the shoreline where travelers, mostly, buyers and sellers on their way to the market, wait for bancas that transport them (angelfire, 2014). In Metro Manila, people have their own variation in making Pancit Malabon, some add fresh spring onions, bean sprouts, salted eggs, bokchoy, oyster or even fish eggs to name some. The main reason why more on toppings and ingredients are seafood is because of the city's location. The dry, firm, fat white noodles were made of seventy percent rice and thirty percent flour.

1.1 Pancit Malabon in the making

Even before the arrival of the Spaniards, Malabon has already been occupied by mostly Filipino-Chinese. The Chinese were the first to introduce noodles in our country. Chinese pancit gets its name from the Hokkien *pian i sit* which means "something conveniently cooked fast." But how did Pancit Malabon get its name?

Malabon before is once a quaint town. During the Spaniards time it was called, "Tambobong". Tambobong has been one of the tribal domains of Rajah Soliman, cousin of Rajah Matanda nearby Manila area. Tambobong is a place considered before as just a land where plants like the tambo (tiger grass) and Labong (edible bamboo shoots) would thrive. Malabon during the Spanish Era was said to be the perfect riverside spot for the government in Intramuros and the friars. And become known as Malabon. Mala because of the mud that makes their expensive leather shoes and exquisite, long robes imported from Europe, dirty and ruined. And it was "bon/buen" for its fresh air and excellent cuisine. Malabon was founded as a "Visita" of Tondo and came under administration of the Augustinian friars on May 21, 1599 and remained under the administrative jurisdiction of the province of Tondo from 1627 to 1688, along with the town of Navotas. However, after 260 years and within several years, the twin town was separated. After the American revolution of 1896-

1898, twentieth century Malabon became a town of the Rizal province through the Philippine Commission Act No. 137. And it was reunited with the town of Navotas through Philippines Commission Act. No.946. In January 6, 1906, six years later Navotas was separated from Malabon, through initiatives of the principales of San Jose and Bangkulasi, due to the difficulty of transacting business and attending religious festivities in the mother town. November 7, 1975 Malabon became part of Metro Manila through Presidential Decree No. 824. (Malabon, 2013). With this, it seems that the popular Pancit Malabon was originally from Navotas but due to geographical changes, that part of Navotas is now what we call Malabon.

According to one of our interviewees, during festivities, Malabonian always prepare its Pancit with seafood varieties and duck eggs as toppings and their tradition popularized the now what we call as, "Pancit Malabon."

2. METHODOLOGY

Using ethnography, we went through Malabon and interviewed the residents and owners of Pancit Malabon businesses to be able to obtain data that will answer our research objectives.

2.1 Pancit Malabon: A Way of Life

Malabon is surrounded by water that is why the main ingredients in the dish are more on seafood. Many people living in Malabon built their businesses and their specialty is Pancit Malabon. The dish gave benefits to the host community. It also became the favorite dish in the city not only in Malabon but also among Places near town and cities. As time goes by the dish became famous. Many restaurants cook this dish and put in their menu. The Malabonians became more profitable because of it. There are also small businesses that offer this dish. It is sold by the size of the *bilao* (bamboo round container) where you can buy something as small as a plate, where it can feed four persons, to as big as a small round coffee table,



where it can feed thirty people, having said that, we barely make this at home as it is cheaper and easier to buy them on shops.

The three famous makers of Pancit Malabon are the Nanay's Pancit Malabon is located at Governor Pascual Ave cor Sto. Rosario Village, Concepcion, Malabon City and Aling Rosy's Pancit Malabon located is located at A. Bonifacio corner Arellano HulongDagat, Malabon (Cecile M., 2010), and also the Pancit ng taga Malabon, located at Cubao, Quezon City.

2.2 Nanay's Pancit Malabon

The NANAY's Pancit started sharing the family's recipe. Their dish is made of eggs, shrimp, petchay, tinapa, celery, chicharon, ulo ng baboy and special sauce made of cassava. Their store is located along Governor Pascual Ave cor Sto. Rosario Village, Concepcion, Malabon City. Nanay Remedios Cruz is a great cook. She became increasingly popular with a new generation of pancit malabon-lovers. NANAY's Pancit Malabon stay still in the heart of the people. It has its own delicious flavor that has acquired a huge following among Malabon residents. The eatery also looks like home and makes costumers feel at their own house (Cecil M., 2010).

2.3 Pancit ng Taga Malabon

Pancit ng Taga Malabon is located along Cubao, Quezon City. From 1966, when the first restaurant "Pancit ng taga Malabon" was opened, several branches were developed one after the other. The first branch along Aurora Boulevard corner Harvard Street came two years later in 1968. At present, they have seven branches. Indeed, "pancit bame" has gone a long way. And the pondahan of the Caligays developed into a famous and growing chain of restaurants which can be attributed to the nine enterprising sons and daughters of Pedro and Leonora who took it to themselves to manage the branches. They have already introduced innovations like using styro

boxes and included other well-loved Filipino dishes in the menu but the sauce, the noodles, and the tradition continues, and with the guidance of Impong Inay's grandchildren or Emilia's Sons, the new Caligay generation's enthusiasm will certainly bring "Pancit ng taga Malabon" to far greater heights(pancit ng taga malabon, 2014).

2.4 Rosy's Pancit Malabon

Aling Rosy's Pancit Malabon is located at A. Bonifacio corner C. Arellano Hulong Dagat, Malabon. According to one of the many write-ups posted on the wall of ROSY's, it was more than 60 years ago that Aling Felisa Pacheco opened a small eatery at Cuatro Cantos serving only pancit malabon and tokwa at baboy. Her seven children learned the secret recipe of preparing what came to be known as the best tasting pansit in Malabon. Mang Silvestre the husband of Aling Felisa expanded the small eatery by his wife. Aling Felisa died in 1951, and her eldest daughter Rosy took over the operations, assisted by her brothers and sisters. They still continue to operate the eatery both at the original site in Cuatro Cantos and at their branch in Phil trade across the Department of Foreign Affairs (Cecil M., 2010).

3 THE ORIGINAL MAKER OF PANCIT MALABON: HERITAGE

During our ocular, we discover that one of the oldest makers of Pancit Malabon is the restaurant of Norma's Pancit Luglog. It is located at 28 Yangco Street Navotas City.

On August 13, 2014, Wednesday in the morning at exactly 10 o'clock we went to Norma's Pancit Lug-log at 28 Yangco St. Navotas City. We interviewed the younger brother of Aling Norma. He is Boying Concepcion. Norma Concepcion is the complete name of Aling Norma. She is 70 years old, born on January 31, 1938 and she died on January 12, 2008. She and her sibilings grew up in Navotas City and currently living at the same city.



Their business started with a little restaurant at Ignacio Street Navotas City. Their parents helped them to build it little by little. Their branch in Yangco Street is serving the people 25 years ago and still counting. They name the business after the name of Aling Norma. "Sa kanya kasi nagsimula ito at kami ang nagpapatuloy" kuya Boying said. They are living in Navotas but people call their Pancit Lug-log also as Pancit Malabon.

Boying shared in our interview that even before Navotas became part of Malabon, the dish was already known as, "pancit Malabon." *"Nakagisnan na kasi ng mga tao na tawagin itong Pancit Malabon at dala narin ng panahon."* Their business became popular because of its unique taste. *"Kasi ito ay masarap, malinamnam at hindi nakakasawa kaya ito ay anti-unting dinayo at nakilala"*. According to him, until now, people of Navotas and Malabon continue to support their business, *"Marunong kasi makisama ang tao dito sa amin at dahil narin sa magandang serbisyo namin."* He shared that flood and typhoon is the worst problem coming through their business. Navotas and Malabon are even known for being flooded area. During our interview we saw their regular customers. One of the customer said, *"Marami talagang bumibili dito kasi masarap at marunong makisama ang mga tao dito."*

Norma's Pancit Lug-log is not only popular in Navotas and Malabon. They had already been featured in many magazines and journals. We failed to see and take some pictures of their awards, trophy, certificates and other materials that they have as memorabilia. At that time, they were very busy and they had many customers. There are two magazines that we borrowed from Boying. The *Balikbayan (The Asian Journal Magazine)*, and the *Spot (Top 10 Everything Food List)*. Both magazines featured the success of the Norma's Pancit Lug-log.

Their business helped them a lot. *"Maraming natulong itong negosyo na ito sa aming buhay, malaki, lalu na sa pagbibigay halaga sa negosyo at pamilya. Importante and iisang layunin sa negosyo*

kahit magkakaiba ang pananaw ng mga magkapatid.", Boying shared.

4. TOURISM AND PANCIT MALABON

Pancit Malabon can promote tourism. Pancit Malabon is a traditional Filipino food rich in cultural heritage in which every Filipino family must be proud of. Our country has been influence by different cultures; the Spaniards, the Americans, the Japanese but before them, we had the Hindus, the Chinese and many more, in which each country brought their culture, language, beliefs, the way of living and of course food. Despite of their influences, Malaboñans' creativity made a heritage that can be called Filipino product.

Based on our interview with the different families, this Pancit Malabon is a trade mark of the Malaboñans and the place itself. People in these places made this food famous. This started from eating together and became a family business until it became a tradition. Malabon and Navotas are two places in the Philippines where food business is common to all. Native of Malabon and Navotas are passionate of their business. They spread their business not only in the locality, but also among their nearby towns, cities and the whole country. News spread throughout until different places joined the crowd of Pancit Malabon.

"Pancit Malabon" lavishly decorated with different toppings on it made the Malaboñans proud of it. After our study, we felt that Pancit Malabon also symbolizes strong family ties that will reign on forever and the taste which will remain in each heart. Pancit Malabon is truly a heritage.

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