

Famous Delicacies of Selected Municipalities in the Province of Laguna: A Tourist Attraction for Culinary Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study showcased the famous delicacies of selected municipalities in Laguna, determined the impact of famous delicacies to the culinary tourism in Laguna and proposed an action plan on how those delicacies can be part of culinary tourism. The researchers utilized the descriptive research and qualitative method to provide facts which could form basis of scientific judgments that can help measures things, events or phenomenon such as interviews, observation and questionnaires and it aims to develop an understanding of the context in which phenomena and behaviors take place. The researchers concluded that the famous delicacies on selected municipality of Laguna are Buko pie, Kesong puti, Mer-nels cake, Espasol, Cassava cake, Cassava chips, Uraro, Bibingka, and Ube. These delicacies have great impact in the tourism industry of Province of Laguna. It is also a means of income for the economic growth of Laguna and a way to boost employment. These will create a trademark that will distinguish the province. Sustaining the food quality of these delicacies is one of the propose action plan that will improve the culinary tourism of the province. Through the cooperation of non-government and government sector, these delicacies may continue in striving its popularity and expenditures.

I. INTRODUCTION

Visiting a local market, festival restaurant or winery of a certain destination is a part of a wider range of lifestyle activities of culinary tourism. It is not limited to gourmet food, this is perhaps best illustrated by the notion that culinary tourism is about what is unique and memorable (Hall et al, 2003). Food is one of the essential elements of the tourist experience. Food tourism may be defined as visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production region are the primary motivating factors for travel (Hall and Mitchell, 2001). According to Goeldner and Ritchie 2006, tourism may be defined as the processes, activities and outcomes arising from the relationships and the interactions among tourists, tourism suppliers, host government, host communities and surrounding environments that are involved. Tourism is firmly established as the number one industry in many countries and the fastest growing economic sector

in terms of foreign exchange earnings and job creation (Walker, 2004).

In terms of foods recognition, the Philippines are incomparably different from its neighboring countries, especially when it comes to delicacies. It is customary to the Filipinos to buy famous products every time they go to a certain place. Apparently, in every place in the Philippines there are different varieties of sweet delicacies that served as their pride and one of them is the Province Laguna.

Laguna is one of the provinces in the CALABARZON or Southern of Tagalog, region of Luzon. It is located at South of Manila and is a popular weekend getaway destination especially during the summer. The province was named after the Spanish word “lago”, which means “lake”, referring to the large body of Laguna de Bay, the largest lake in the country. The town of Bay was the first capital, hence Laguna de Bay literally means “Lake of Bay”. Aside from its amazing tourist’s destinations, the people of Laguna also celebrate various festivals, such as the Anilag Festival, Ana Kalang Festival, and Turumba Festival.

Laguna is also known for its delicacies and appetizing food products. In addition Laguna has its own particular product with its distinct taste that is mainly raised in different municipalities such as Santa Cruz, Laguna that is known for its white cheese or kesongputi; Los Baños, Laguna is famous for its mer-nels cake and buko pie; San Pablo, Laguna is known for its delicious ube; Nagcarlan is known for its espasol and uraro; and Pagsanjan is famous for its Bibingka.

This research can be a basis for new ideas, serve as an eye-opener, and most of all broaden the readers’ knowledge in different ways. The findings of this investigation shall be of benefit to the Business owners of various delicacies shops in Laguna that will contribute for the promotion and improvement of their business. The Government of Laguna will have new ideas for the tourism development plan on how their delicacies can be part of Culinary Tourism of Laguna and enhance their existing tourism plans. And lastly to the future researchers, it can serve as a pattern for the same endeavor or even be a reference material for their papers.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the “Famous Delicacies of Selected Municipalities in the Province of Laguna: A Tourist Attraction for Culinary Tourism”. More specifically, it showcased the famous delicacies of selected municipalities in Laguna, determined the impact of famous delicacies to the culinary tourism in Laguna and proposed an action plan on how those delicacies can be part of culinary tourism.

III. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The researchers used descriptive research and qualitative research because it valuable in providing facts which could form basis of scientific judgments that can help measures things, events or phenomenon such as interviews, observation and questionnaires and it aims to develop an understanding of the context in which phenomena and behaviors take place. Descriptive research is a study that describes the nature of the phenomenon under investigation after a survey of current trends, practices and conditions that relate to

that phenomenon. It involves analysis of an extremely broad range of phenomenon; its result is a comprehensive presentation and interpretation of statistical tabulations of data yielded by a survey (Tan, 2006).

The researchers utilized thirty one respondents composed of five residents in each municipality of Santa Cruz, Los Banos, Nagcarlan, Pagsanjan and San Pablo Laguna, five Managers or Shop Owners on selected municipalities in the Province of Laguna and one Provincial Tourism Officer of Laguna that were taken on the basis of professionals and non-professionals. In order to acquire the essential data, the researchers constructed a self-prepared, interview guide. This interview guide will be the main data gathering to obtain the necessary information regarding which is composed of ten questions per category of participants. It is consist of two parts related to the particular title. Part one asks the respondent's profile in terms of name, age and gender. Part two interview guide are open-ended questions that allow respondents to answer in an unconstrained way, often using as many words as they like and allow exploration to occur. The questions are about the famous delicacies of selected municipalities of Laguna, the impact of these delicacies in Laguna and a propose plan for its culinary tourism.

The researchers thought of an interesting topic and the group requested their research adviser for approval. The researchers spent time in the library to gather the information they need through the use of related books, thesis samples and other sources and reference that is essential to the study. The researchers also visited selected municipalities of Laguna to conduct an interview about the topic. The draft of the interview guide was submitted to the research adviser for consultation and approval. After the interview guide has been approved, the group distributed it to the respondents and gives them a brief orientation about the purpose of the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Famous delicacies and impact perceived by the respondents from selected municipalities in Laguna

All five respondents of Santa Cruz choose kesongputi as famous delicacy in their municipality; three out of five respondents in Los Baños preferred buko pie; and the two prefer Mer-nels Cake; three out of five residents in San Pablo choose ube; all five respondents of Nagcarlan choose espasol and uraro; four out of five resident of Pagsanjan preferred bibingka. Therefore, it was proven that the famous delicacy in Sta. Cruz is kesongputi; in Los Banos is Buko pie and Mer-Nels Cake; in San Pablo is Ube while in Nagcarlan is Espasol and Uraro and in Pagsanjan is Bibingka. Respondents from different municipalities perceived different impact of delicacies in tourism. According to the residents of Sta. Cruz, their delicacies boost the culinary tourism / tourism industry of Laguna through additional tax as well as for the employment and as a tourist attraction of Laguna. Number of unemployed will lessen. There was an increased in the products demand in Los Baños through pasaubong because of its cheaper price but quality taste. It also showcases the culture of Laguenenos taught by their ancestors and their agricultural way of living is also involved while for the residents of San Pablo, delicacies have great impact due to the increased number of business with high quality of food production in the area. Most tourists were coming back for the reason of food and cultural festivals which gives great experience of eating while travelling for the residents of Pagsanjan while for the residents of Nagcarlan, these delicacies were not only for local consumption but also internationally consumed through exporting because its quality has been proven.

All respondents on the selected municipalities agreed that famous delicacies have a great impact in the culinary tourism through the significant connection of their culture to agricultural way of their life were they showcase it through their feast day and festivals. Famous delicacies also affect the tourism industry of the province through attaining high end markets. For their propose action plan on how these delicacies can be part of culinary tourism, ten respondents said through conducting provincial festival; eight said through more advertisement like television, radio, website and magazines; seven of the respondents suggested through exporting the delicacies.

Gastronomic tours of Europe and Asia have an appeal to “foodies” among us. If not the main reason for a trip, culinary adventures are certainly contributing reason, and the appeal is growing stronger with the advent of such programs as Anthony Bourdain’s “No Reservation” (Walker, 2004).

The Philippine delicacies might not be too popular globally. But the Filipino culture is really visible in their foods and how they share it with their family. Filipino food is expected to leap forward globally as food producers continue to offer unique flavors that captivate the world food market. Corollary to this, delicacies have a great impact for the residents of Laguna not only because it serve as their pride but also a source of income.

Impact of the famous delicacies perceived by the business owners from the selected municipalities in Laguna

Most respondents of delicacy businesses established their property for almost 30 years. Buko Pie, Cassava Cake, Espasol, Ube, Bibingka and Uraro are the most common products in their business. According to them it is one of the sources of income and employment for the residents. Delicacies attract tourists/consumers because of its taste and affordable price with its best quality. Some of their products were being exported to other countries like cassava chips and uraro which used vacuum seal to extend the duration and preserve the quality of the food. Mernel’s Cake, Colettes Buko Pie, El Mare, Mercy’s Pasalubong, Mitz’ Buko Pie and KesongPuti Shop have their branches in other location as part of their marketing strategy. Based on the interview, ColettesBuko Pie has its most number of branches not only in Laguna but also in near provinces. However there are some who have walk-in vendors who sell in bus station and other near towns. They also gave whole sale price for bulk orders and they have contact retailers for more consumers.

For the business owners of Los Banos, delicacies serve as trademark of the province because they were known for the large number of the same nature of business which involves food especially Buko pie. Business owners of Sta. Cruz perceived delicacies as an additional source of income because it creates profit that adds to finance the needs of their living. Most business owners of San Pablo perceived that these foods appeal tourists to visit the province because of its festivals and cultural activities while for the respondents in Nagcarlan, these delicacies become the reason of travelling because some products were not available in some area of the country. Business owners of Pagsanjan professed its impact as it increase the number of food retailers because most products were purchased directly to the province where original manufacturing area were located.

Another testimony from the business owners of Los Baños and Sta. Cruz is that delicacies were also part of their culture. These were shown through their festivals and feast days. The way they cooked delicacies are also part of it as it is an inherited skills from their ancestors. According to seven out of ten respondents, delicacies serve as the trademark of Laguna that help in boosting their tourism industry. There are foreigners, celebrities and mostly local tourists who keep on returning to purchase their products. As their proposed action plan, most business owners suggested to have more advertisements and having other branches to other location so that delicacies will be known locally and internationally.

Delicacies of Los Baños, San Pablo, Sta. Cruz, Nagcarlan and Pagsanjan as part of culinary tourism and agritourism, became famous for it is one of the best products of the province. This is one way of attracting tourist for the purpose of food and eating. This serve as “pasalubong” for tourists thus it serves as source of income for Laguneños. They celebrate festivals to show their gratitude and make tourists vacation more enjoyable. More advertisement was really a good help to know this products however government sector must also give priority to province’s delicacies and have an action plan to make a progress in exportation so that these delicacies will be part of the market globally.

Impact of famous delicacies as perceived by the Senior Provincial Tourism Officer of Sta. Cruz

According to Mrs. Dalisay De Leon Paraiso, the Senior Provincial Tourism officer of Laguna, the top five municipalities that showcase their famous delicacies are Santa Cruz which is very famous for its Kesong Puti; Los Baños for its Buko pie, cassava chips and cassava cake; Pagsanjan for their bibingka and nata de coco with calamansi; Nagcarlan for their espasol and uraro; and San Pablo for its ubehalaya and banana chips. The impact of these delicacies in culinary tourism of Laguna are being a means of attraction through taste and ways of promoting Laguna as diversified not only attractions but also the food. Some of the propose action plan are through festivals which will showcase the famous delicacies in different municipalities and through different promotional strategies like brochures and promotional or collateral materials for the campaign of culinary tourism.

The Provincial Tourism Officer of Laguna is certainly correct that these famous delicacies in each municipality have a huge impact for the culinary tourism of Laguna. It can be a means of income through taxes for the economic growth of the industry and a tourist attraction that will surely capture the attention of the tourist through its delicious taste and affordable prices.

Social Benefits

Delicacies of Laguna benefited its community through employment since farming is the most commonly job in the province. These will also create more food business establishments. Famous delicacies were made of natural ingredients which contain vitamins and nutrients of fruits and vegetables. Another social benefit of it is the promotion that may seek investments from other business industry. Increased of investment may lead to a greater productivity.

Social factors and cultural practices in most countries have a great influence on what people eat

and how they prepare food, on their feeding practices and on the foods they prefer. It is true, however, that some traditional food practices and taboos in some societies may contribute to nutritional deficiencies among particular groups of the population. Nutritionists need to have knowledge of the food habits and practices of the communities in which they work so that they can help to reinforce the positive habits as well as strive to change any negative ones.

Economic Benefits

A critical objective for any community is to promote investments that serve to increase the economic and social opportunities available for residents. Business establishment of delicacies provide employment and pay their taxes in their concerned area. As part of it, they help mostly the farmers and those who are unemployed because of poverty. They also contribute to the welfare of the community through their festivals and activities that these delicacies were involved. If Laguna wishes to sustain current agricultural production in the future, there must be a market for emerging farmers to know the effects of a collectively aging farmer population. The introduction of farmer's markets into the local economy can have a direct positive impact on the lives of all citizens within the community.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researchers therefore conclude that the famous delicacies on selected municipality of Laguna are Buko pie, Kesongputi, Mer-nels cake, Espasol, Cassava cake, Cassava chips, Uraro, Bibingka, and Ube. The impact of these delicacies in the Province of Laguna became a tourist attraction in culinary tourism for it has intentional and exploratory participation in food ways including the consumption, preparation and presentation of food items. Creates an economic growth to Laguna and a way to boost employment to the local residents of Laguna. The famous delicacies became the trademark of the entire Laguna province and distinguish its uniqueness of products in other community through exportation. Enhancing the food quality, packaging and appealing taste of these delicacies will improve the culinary tourism of the province. Presentation of products can be made easy through provincial delicacies' festivals and conventions which can be done nationally and internationally. There must be aggressive strategic promotions on the products through television, prints, radio and website. These delicacies may continue in striving its popularity and expenditures through the cooperation of non-government and government sector.

Manufacturers of delicacies should develop their procedures in cooking to extend the lifespan of the food. They must also include the ingredients and nutrition facts in the wrapper or box. The products must also be under DTI supervision. The business owners can improve the products and its quality since it attracts tourism to the province. They must be innovative with its taste and willing to explore on how they can improve the products. The Government of Laguna should help the business owners in promoting and popularizing the products. They can also provide seminars to the locals of Laguna on how to make the popular delicacies to provide additional income and possible employment.

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