

# Attracting Tourists thru Specialty Foods of Calapan Oriental Mindoro

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## ABSTRACT

This study is about Calapan Specialty Foods as a Culinary Attraction in Oriental Mindoro. The researchers used descriptive and qualitative method with Tourism Officer, Residents and Restaurant Owners as respondents. The researchers concluded that restaurant and eateries in Calapan satisfy their customers with the services offered; that the competitiveness of the business is translated into profit gains; that most of the problems they encounter with the employees pertain to attitudes and customer complaints; and all restaurant managers conclude that they handle customer complaints by simply talking to them, admitting the mistakes, explaining and apologizing, showing concerns and willingness to listen, and finding out appropriate solution. The researcher recommended that seminars must be conducted in order to improve handling of customer complaints and to address need for customer satisfaction and competitiveness of franchising may be done through promotions and suggestive selling.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism is a way of attracting tourist thru foods in a certain place. It is a practice wherein a kind of tourism is taking place when particular tourists visit a place because of their own foods. The main reason of travel here is food since it is one of the essential elements of the tourist experience (Hall & Sharples 2003). There is also a need to determine the kind of tourist that will be going to your place. Classifying tourist according to its perception, nationality, and culture they have will help to uplift the culinary tourism.

Oriental Mindoro (Filipino: Silangang Mindoro, "Eastern Mindoro"; Spanish: Mindoro Oriental) is a province located in the island of Mindoro under region IV-MIMAROPA, about 140 km southwest of Manila with a total land area of 436,470 hectares. It is composed of 14 municipalities and only one city – Calapan City as the capital of the province. It has 39 named and 89 unnamed islands and islets, living much of its attraction virgin to its visitors and untraveled area to explore.

Oriental Mindoro enjoys a climate favorable to vegetable growth throughout the year. What is remarkable is that there is neither a dry season nor a pronounced maximum rain period. The location and topography of the island on the western side of the great ocean body is another contributing factor in the rainfall pattern of the province. China Sea, fed by warm water from a branch of south equatorial current, passes between Singapore and Borneo thus keeping the water bodies surrounding the island warm year-round and consequently providing excellent sources of moisture.

This study intends to determine the native foods and delicacies of Calapan particularly barangay San Vicente in Lumang Bayan. It will serve as a basis on how to promote the specialty foods of Calapan to tourists. For the residents of Calapan, this study will help their place to be known to other places especially for tourists through their foods. For the future researchers, this paper will serve as a guide or reference to those students who would like to do follow up research on the same topic. Furthermore, the researchers believed that it can be a very significant additional reference for the future researchers. Lastly, this will enlighten the present researchers to gain insights on how culinary tourism works.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the different specialty foods of the mentioned place. It highlighted the distinguishing characteristics of specialty foods in Calapan. Lastly, it determines the motivating factors of how tourists will be attracted through their specialty foods.

## III. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study entitled "Attracting Tourist through Specialty Foods of Calapan Oriental Mindoro" utilized the descriptive and qualitative method of research. Descriptive research describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. It uses descriptive statistics including frequency counts, measures of central tendency like the mean or mode, or measure of variation like standard deviation (Samouel et. al 2003)

The respondents of this study consist of ten (10) eatery/restaurant/stall owners, ten (10) residents who are chosen from Barangay San Vicente living near the public market, and one (1) member of Department of Tourism. It is necessary to compare the responses of the respondents in order to have an accurate analysis of the problem.

The interview served as the main data gathering instrument to acquire the necessary information about the specialty foods and its importance. The study used as an interview guide which is composed of 30 questions which were asked to the participants. The researchers need to record any potentially useful data thoroughly, systematically, accurately and other suitable means. The data collection methods must observe the ethical principles of research.

The researchers submitted a rough draft of the interview guide to their adviser for approval and consultation. Then the researchers sent a letter to the participants of this study to conduct the said interview. Once the letter had been approved, the researchers started to complete the interview. All the information gathered by the researchers became part of the study.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tourism officer identified sumansalihiya as the number 1 most known specialty food in Cala-

pan. It is followed by adobo then banana chips and crackers as the third. Semi dried fish ranks fourth and peanut butter which is the fifth. Whereas, the most popular specialty food for residents is sumansalihiya. It is followed by adobo and banana chips and crackers ranks third. Semi dried fish and peanut butter has the same ranking.

On the eatery/residents/stall owner, the sumansalihiya and adobo has the same ranking as the first. It was followed by banana chips and crackers. Semi dried fish and peanut butter got the same on ranking. Respondents said that sumansalihiya has its extraordinary taste, texture and aroma that makes it to be known. It also guarantees the hundred percent safe and healthy ingredients. As a matter of fact, it gives mark to Calapan for it is being sold not only within but to other places as well.

Calapan's Adobo ranks second since it is avail by the tourist here. The secret ingredients that Calapeños adds to their adobo makes it attracts the taste of the guests. Banana chips and crackers in Calapan are also known here for the safe preservatives that it contains for the health of the consumers. The ingredients used here is also a proud product here. It catches the taste of the consumer for its sweet and crispy taste.

The semi dried fish are crispy, chewy, meaty and tasty without being overly salty and just downright memorable. The eatery owner said that once it fried, the fish had a slightly unusual texture, softer than just plain fried fish, and the flavor was excellent. Calapan's peanut butter is very delicious as the researchers tasted it. It is a food paste made primarily from ground dry roasted peanuts and it is hardly a low-fat food. Its taste catches every consumer of this product.

One of the key components of the relationship between food and tourism and regional development is that of the promotion of local foods as well as direct purchase by consumers, the use of local food by restaurants is also significant in enhancing local food production, while branding menus in terms of their local food content may also be significant in marketing the menu and the restaurant as well as potentially leading to ongoing purchase of regional food stuffs by consumers (Hall, et al 2003).

True in the saying, the way to a man's heart is thru his stomach, the researchers believe that the way to a tourist's heart is thru their stomach. And the way to their stomach is thru the specialty foods of a certain place. Every officer is very particular to their place that their foods could give delicious and breathtaking menus to their customers. Sumansalihiya nowadays invaded the whole country. This is now one of Calapan's prides, the best suman in the region as well as the country.

Specialty food of a certain place has a lot to do on tourists. Like what others say, food business doesn't experience bankruptcy because people are fond of their capital. So, it is very important to take good care of the customers as well as the foods. And it can be a way to a certain place to promote their foods as tourist attraction. According to tourism officer their native cuisine is considered really as an asset because it has economic value, which has the ability to generate income by means of taxes paid on sale of specialty foods, and to increase employment since it requires continuity on the demand of these specialty foods.

Food is a sustaining and enduring necessity. Yet among the basic essentials for life — air, water, shelter, and food — only food has been absent over the years as a focus of serious professional planning

interest. This is a puzzling omission because, as a discipline, planning marks its distinctiveness by being comprehensive in scope and attentive to the temporal dimensions and spatial interconnections among important facets of community life. Several reasons explain why planners have paid less attention to food issues when compared with long-standing planning topics such as economic development, transportation, the environment, and housing. (Wekerle, Gerda. 2007. "Food Justice Movements: Policy, Planning, and Networks." *Journal of Planning Education and Research*)

Calapan's specialty foods particularly *sumansalihiya* is being offered not only in their place but even in other provinces. It shows that it is very popular because of its extraordinary taste. The market of this product continues to explore and being brought to the different places in the country. This also marks the growth of one town, one product from Calapan City. It is so interesting to know that the quality of this product is excellent

He said that plans have been designed to prolong a good market for these delicacies. A successful plan to preserve this translates into increased sales, faster turnover and higher profits, and so sales and marketing strategy is of great importance. It also involves the following plans like giving people a combination of excellent food that is health wise. Next is obtaining quality and establishing a strong identity nationwide. Other is keeping the high standard of these specialty foods. And last is to make the menu of these specialty foods a competitive edge.

Every business needs an action plan and promotion of the product in order to survive according to the tourism officer. Some of the ways are: engaging in promotion of products as invited in by the Department of Trade and Industry to different hotels and establishments; sponsoring a show or gathering that has great number of attendees, this will offer higher visibility of products to a group; ensuring word of mouth referral, thus a very powerful form of advertisement like newspaper and its own website.

The sales plan is to establish and maintain position with local and foreign customers. The strategy is to build more customers in order to increase revenue by advertising and promoting their products. It shall focus in making the customers happy with the foods.

The best approach to advertising is to think of it in terms of media and which media will be most effective in reaching the target market. Every business will include some of these in their promotion plans. The most common marketing material is the business card, hence, brochures, pamphlets and service sheets are also common. Another promotion that every business should use is to describe how to generate publicity. While press releases spring to mind, that is only one way to get people spreading the word about the business. There is really a big chance for culinary tourism in Calapan City since it is the gateway to the South and the Nautical Highway. Raw products are always available and so there is no need of importing the same product to other places.

Culinary tourism is when people travel to a different country or a different part of a country to enjoy local cuisine. Travelers often look specifically for places with a rich cuisine, food and drink festivals, and cooking classes. Many different destinations are popular for culinary tourism, such as France, Thailand, India, and Japan. Generally, culinary tourists are interested in local delicacies and cuisine rather than generic dishes they could find in their home town. The identification of the trend has allowed popular destinations

to capitalize on the interest in their cuisine. (Johnson, 2012).

### **Motivating factors**

Advertising and promotion are needed for a certain product to be known in the market. They have the same role when it comes to offering the product to the market. They are the best way to communicate to customers. It is for everybody including kids, young and adults. It is a way of giving the consumers the idea of what is with the product that they are going to consume.

Moreover, food safety is also one of the considerations of the consumers in buying products. In the preparation of sumansalihiya, food safety is being prioritized by the manufacturers. It is evidently proven since the researchers observed the preparation of it while they were conducting the interviews in Calapan. The uniqueness, taste and safe preparation of sumansalihiya are some of the things that are mentioned by the majority of Calapeños that makes it popular to the tourists. It also does not contain any chemicals that assure the safety of food for the consumers. It is true that Philippines are rich in the native foods. Calapeños are artistic for they discover specialty foods that they can be proud of Calapan. It can be considered as their asset to others. It also has the competitive side to the market. The researchers believe that through this way there will be a possibility that the pride of Calapan which is the “suman sa lihiya” can also be known not only here in local but international as well. Suman sa lihiya is also considered as the most popular among tourists going there. It gives mark to the tourist for its delicious taste that make them used to buy it. It also gives name to the Calapan for it is available in other places locally.

Having a product that gives name to a certain place is a pride that may say. Like this suman sa lihiya of Calapan, it is a great opportunity for them to be able to use this product as their competitive asset in the market. Since tourists used to buy this, there is a big chance for it to be known and be availed by many.

Purchasing of this product vary from the time tourists visit Calapan. It is according to the Calapeños that tourists go there to avail this product in their every visit. They also visit the store in some parts of Manila to buy this item. Common complaint from the consumers that the Calapenos are encountering is sometimes they are served with raw foods especially the fried one. The action that the business owner does is to serve them another type of food. There are also cases when some delicacies have inappropriate or higher price because other stores put higher marked up.

## **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The researchers conclude that the different specialty foods in Calapan include sumansalihiya, semi dried fish, adobo, rice crispies, and banana chips and crackers. They also have their special adobo. These foods had been known not only in Calapan City but in the entire country. These changes uplift the economic conditions of Calapeños and promote their place as a culinary attraction. The different characteristics of these foods are its delicious taste, colour, aroma, nutritional value, life-sustaining, and affordable prices. Among the factors that are considered in motivating tourists thru their specialty foods are food safety, originality, uniqueness of specific processing ingredients, food wholesomeness, and extraordinary packaging. The promotion of Calapan City specialty foods has been of great help to tourism growth and has been a Mindoro’s pride because it provides employment and income opportunities for the residents of Calapan.

Partnership with other local restaurants should make to create a culinary event that will benefit the entire dining scene to promote culinary tourism. The City Government of Calapan should implement programs that will enhance culinary tourism in Calapan City such as holding contests on their different specialty foods, creating cooperative marketing opportunities for local eateries and restaurants to build name and recognition for their specialty foods regionally and nationwide, and creating their own line of customized products that can serve as another major source of revenue in order to make huge economic impact on their native specialty foods. Lastly, promoting different festivals should execute to showcase different specialty foods of Calapan.

## REFERENCES

Hall, Michael C., et al., 2003, *Food Tourist around the World: Development, Management and Markets*, Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann Publications, Jordan Hill, Oxford

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