



Sinigang na Hipon



Bulalo



Daing na Bangus



Kare-Kare



Pinakbet

Filipino culture has been a point of local interest for some time now. Show bands from the Philippines storm the stages of Sabahan bars and clubs in most parts of Kota Kinabalu. Tearjerking Filipino soap operas keep several glued to their television sets for their daily dose of drama. Some locals have even gone as far as to speak bits of Tagalog fairly well, greeting each other fluently in the Filipino language.

There is also the subject of food. Philippine cuisine is a colourful gem, drawing ingredients and ideas from a number of sources, with some hefty influence from the cooking traditions of the country's Spanish colonist. Some Chinese culinary touches can be seen here and there, with plenty of Filipino resourcefulness and ingenuity also thrown into the mix. The result is a varied range of flavours and textures that offer something to suit almost any type of palate.

Lutong Barrio joins the short list of specialised Filipino restaurants in Kota Kinabalu, equipped with a menu that features a sizable slice of what genuine Philippine cuisine has to offer. Translating loosely to 'neighbourhood cooking', this nondescript little restaurant in the Asia City area is staffed by head chef Enrico "Henry" Manalo, his wife Mary, and a small team of cooks and servers.

Henry reveals that he has little formal training in cooking, having only taken baking classes back in the Philippines. In fact, the 32-year-old chef graduated with a degree in dentistry. His educational choices have had little effect on his natural talent and passion for cooking, however, as he rapidly but efficiently files dishes out of his kitchen at Lutong Barrio, eventually piling them all onto one table that threatens to collapse under the weight of so many delicious dishes.

A quick glance at Lutong Barrio's menu makes it clear that the majority of Filipino favourites are readily available for enjoyment, giving adventurous eaters a good range of recipes to sample and Filipinos a hearty taste of home. Perhaps the most familiar of these many dishes is the Spanish adobo. Generally used to describe a style of cooking, Filipino adobo uses vinegar, soy sauce, peppercorns and bay leaves. It's a sour, savoury dish best eaten with plenty of white rice.

Bulalo is another classic Filipino dish, a beef bone marrow soup made with lots of leek, portions of meat, and of course, flavourful beef bones. Tinola is another iconic soup dish, and features chicken, sayote (green papaya) and other vegetables. Sinigang tops off this trinity of Filipino soups, and is typically made with seafood or meat, tomatoes, okra, and tamarind for that extra sour kick. Bulalo's broth is packed with the taste of beef, Tinola offers more subtle flavours in a thinner soup, and Sinigang is best described as a super sour soup dish. All three are perfect for keeping warm on chilly or rainy days, but KK's currently warm climate shouldn't stop you from giving these dishes a go.

Pinakbet is another item commonly seen on the Filipino menu. The vegetable dish is a potpourri of mostly indigenous vegetables, such as green beans, eggplant, tomatoes, and calabaza (a type of squash). It is also usually cooked with some meat or seafood, in Lutong Barrio's case, some freshly-cooked pieces of shrimp. Kare-kare is also usually seen alongside these other traditional tidbits. Don't let this stew intimidate you with its unusual ingredients. Vegetables, beef and pieces of tripe are cooked in a peanut sauce and served with the Philippine version of our own belacan. This local favourite's cousin, called bagoong, is made out of similar ingredients, and goes great with kare-kare.

Spaghetti seems almost out of place in this roster, but it is no less common. The pasta dish is heralded as a traditional item at most celebrations, and is usually seen at birthdays, Christmas dinners and fiestas, being a simple dish that can easily satisfy guests, especially picky children. Filipino Style Spaghetti draws more from the Americanised version of the recipe, and comes with a twist. Most Filipinos prefer their spaghetti with a sweeter sauce, and has sliced hotdogs mixed into its meat sauce.

And what would a Filipino restaurant be without its own assortment of fresh seafood? Bangus or milkfish features strongly in the Filipino diet, and some variations to try at Lutong Barrio include Inihaw na Bangus (grilled) and Daing na Bangus, or milkfish marinated in vinegar and garlic. Inihaw na Pusit is another classic, a grilled squid dish that is also typically stuffed with other ingredients, in this case a mix of tomatoes, onions and bell pepper. Sizzling Pusit or sizzling squid is another must-try. The dish is served on a hot plate and literally sizzles as it arrives at the table. Take careful measures to avoid its splattering sauces as it settles and enjoy this piping hot mix of fresh seafood and crisp vegetables.

This is only a small sample of all the recipes that Henry has in store at Lutong Barrio. Take your time ordering and be sure to consult the helpful staff on dishes that will best match your own dining preferences. Better yet, pick from a selection of about 20,000 songs and show off your singing skills at the restaurant's karaoke station while you wait for your meal to arrive. Please keep in mind that Lutong Barrio's dishes are not halal, and many recipes contain ingredients that aren't suited to a Muslim diet. Check out Lutong Barrio for a taste of authentic Filipino home cooking and savour the spectrum of flavours that the exotic archipelago has to offer.

Lutong Barrio is located at Block B, Lot 12, Asia City, near Cititel Hotel besides Cowboy Karaoke. The restaurant is open from 9am till late daily and can seat from 50 to 60 people at a time. The dishes are both delicious and inexpensive, so expect to spend an average of RM20 per person. Lutong Barrio and offers free delivery to most locations within the Asia City area. For more information, call 014-3764232.



Tinola