



Mindanao Cuisine

The large island down south has a distinct set of culinary flavors that is distinct from the cuisines of the other islands. Largely influenced by Spanish and Malay flavours of nearby Southeast Asian countries, dishes in Mindanao are known for their use of coconut milk and spices like chili, onion, and ginger. Fresh seafood and tropical fruits are also abundant. Here are just a few of the famous food that shouldn't be missed on your tour of Mindanao. Try making one to eat during the tour.

Mindanao, the second largest island in the country, is culturally diverse which can be especially seen in terms of their distinct food that is heavily influenced by the Malay neighbors. Moro cuisine may not be as famous as the other cuisines from Luzon and Visayas, but it deserves recognition for having a rich and exotic flavor.

It is quite noticeable that the Southern Philippines has a strong connection with Coconut in terms of food preparation. They have a varied ways of preparing food using coconut. Methods include burning of coconut to produce a thick black sauce, and some seasoned coconut meat with turmeric and chili producing a spicy creamy coating.

Beef in Coconut Milk (Beef Kulma)

Ingredients

8 cups water

1 kilogram beef cubes, pochero cut

4 cloves garlic, whole

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon black peppercorns

2 stalks lemongrass

1 medium white onion, quartered

2 cloves garlic, chopped

10 pieces curry leaves, or 1 tablespoon curry powder

1-2 pieces chilies, chopped (optional)

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 tablespoons peanut butter

1 cup fresh coconut milk (gata)

2 stalks lemongrass, chopped

ground black pepper, to taste

salt, to taste

cilantro leaves (wansoy), to garnish

How to cook Beef in Coconut Milk (Beef Kulma)

Make the broth: In a pot over medium-high heat pour water, add beef, garlic, lemongrass, salt and peppercorns. Let simmer for 1 hour or until beef is tender. Remove from heat. Reserve 2 cups broth.

In a pan over medium heat, sauté onion and garlic until fragrant. Add curry leaves, chilies (optional), tomato paste and peanut butter. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes.

Pour in the stock and add the beef. Simmer for another 10 to 15 minutes. Then add coconut milk and lemongrass. Let simmer for another 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat. Top with fresh cilantro.

Ginataang Manok

This chicken recipe involves sauteing chicken with onion, garlic, and ginger, then stewing in coconut cream.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup oil
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered
- ½ red bell pepper, seeded, cored and sliced into strips
- ½ green bell pepper, seeded, cored and sliced into strips
- 1 onion, peeled and sliced thinly
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 1 (3 to 4 pounds) whole chicken, cut into parts
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 (14 ounces) can coconut milk
- ½ cup water
- 4 to 5 Thai chili peppers, stemmed and chopped
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. In a wide skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add potatoes and cook, turning as needed, until lightly browned. With a slotted spoon, remove potatoes from pan and drain on paper towels.
2. Add bell peppers and cook, stirring frequently, for about 30 seconds. With a slotted spoon, remove and drain on paper towels.
3. Remove excess oil from pan except for about 2 tablespoons. Add onions and garlic and cook, stirring regularly, until limp.
4. Add chicken and cook, turning as needed, for about 3 to 5 minutes or until lightly browned and juices run clear. Add fish sauce and cook for 1 to 2 minutes.
5. Add coconut milk and chili peppers. Bring to a simmer. Lower heat, cover, and continue to cook for about 20 to 25 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and sauce is reduced.
6. Add potatoes and cook for about 3 to 5 minutes or until potatoes are tender and sauce is thickened. Add bell peppers and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes or until heated through but still crisp. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot.

Pastil

Pastil is a popular Mindanao food found in the street of Maguindanao. It's basically a rice covered in banana leaf with chicken or beef adobo strips as fillings, which proves that Mindanao cuisine is more on easy-to-follow recipes. Zamboanga has also their own version of the dish. Their pastil is like an *empanada*, but instead of pork and vegetables, pancit noodles (rice noodles) are used as fillings.

Recipe

1 kilo of Chicken

Half an onion, thinly sliced

½ cup oil

¼ cup of Soy Sauce

¾ cup Vinegar

½ tsp. Black Pepper

Salt to taste

4 Cups of White Rice

Banana Leaves for wrapping

PROCEDURE:

1. Cook rice then set aside.
 2. Slice chicken and boil until the meat is tender.
 3. Let the meat cool before making it into flakes.
 4. Put oil in a pan then sauté the sliced onions in low fire. When the onions turn transparent, add the flaked chicken meat, salt, and black pepper.
 5. Cook for 10 minutes before adding the vinegar and soy sauce. Continue to cook until the oil comes out.
 6. Put rice in banana leaves and top it with the chicken adobo flakes then wrap.
- One Pastil usually sells for Php10 in Davao City. (About 25 cents Canadian.)

RENDANG

A dish acquired by Southern Philippines from their neighboring country Indonesia. The Filipino version of the dish is a bit different in terms of preparation methods to suit their tastes and some ingredients are substituted with local components. Filipino *rendang* is prepared by crushing the spices before frying and cooking it with the beef and coconut milk. The dish can also be described as a caramelized curry. Beef rendang is an Indonesian spicy dish and no wonder the cooking is similar to our local dishes because Filipinos also have Indonesian ancestors. But this beef rendang dish has a more tedious way of preparing. You have to make a spice paste first by grinding it on the mortar and pestle and frying it before cooking the beef. Unlike most Filipino cuisines that we throw everything in the pot when cooking. There are also some ingredients that are only indigenous to Indonesia and some parts of Southeast Asia like the galangal, very similar to ginger root in texture and shape but has a more exotic taste. But it can be substituted with ginger.

Ingredients

For the spice paste:

- 8 dried chilies, softened in boiling water and drained
- 10 small shallots, finely chopped
- 7 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tbsp. ginger, minced

- 2 Tbsp. cooking oil
- 5 tsp. galangal, peeled, cut into thin slices (can be substituted with ginger)
- 2 stalks lemongrass, pounded
- 1 pc turmeric leaf
- 5 kaffir lime leaves, torn

For the beef rendang:

- 1 kilo beef briskets cut into cubes
- 1½ cups coconut milk
- brown sugar or muscovado sugar to taste
- salt to taste

Instructions

How to make the spice paste:

1. With mortar and pestle, grind the softened dried chilies, shallots, garlic and ginger into a fine paste.
2. Heat the oil in a stew pot over moderate heat and fry the paste for 10 minutes and until fragrant.
3. Be careful not to burn the paste. Keep adding some oil a little at a time if the paste becomes too dry.
4. Add the galangal (or ginger), lemongrass, turmeric leaf, and kaffir lime leaves.

How to cook beef rendang:

1. Add beef cubes to the fried spice paste. Stir in coconut milk and add salt to taste.
2. Bring to a simmer (don't boil), cover and stir from time to time until beef is tender for about 3 to 4 hours.
3. Add the sugar, increase the heat and cook a few more minutes, until the sauce has thickened. Serve hot with plain steamed rice, turmeric or java rice.

Sambal Chicken is a very flavourful chicken meat dish, juicy inside with a distinctive glutinous crunch on the outside served with a really pungent, sweet spicy hot and tangy sauce perfect with a freshly steamed rice.

Ingredients

- 1 kg chicken thighs, cut into bite sized sections
- salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- 3 egg whites
- 1 1/2 cup tapioca flour
- 2 tbsp bagoong (Philippine condiment made of fermented fish with salt.)
- 1/3 cup dried shrimp, ground to a powder
- 6 pcs shallots
- 6 cloves garlic
- 1 inch fresh ginger, sliced
- 6 pcs long red chilies
- 3 pcs bird eyes chilies

1 stalk lemongrass, white part
1 tbsp tamarind pulp
4 pcs tomatoes, cut in chunks
1 large onion, cut in chunks
3 tbsp tomato sauce
1/2 cup chicken stock
1 tbsp sugar

Instructions

1. Marinate chicken in salt, pepper and egg whites, set aside for 15 minutes.
2. In a food processor combine and blend all sambal ingredients together until it becomes a fine paste. Set aside.
3. Heat oil enough for deep frying in a large wok.
4. Place tapioca flour on a plate, dip chicken into the tapioca flour to coat then deep fry chicken for 10 minutes or until cooked.
5. Using the same wok set aside the oil leaving around 3 tablespoons. Add the sambal paste prepared earlier and sauté until fragrant.
6. Add the tomato sauce, sugar, onions, and chicken stock, cook in high heat for 2 minutes.
7. Add the fried chicken in together with the tomatoes, coat the chicken with the sauce. Add water if you want it to have more sauce bring to a boil then turn heat off and serve while hot.