



New York/New Jersey

Restaurant Row

PINOY EATS

Filipino Food Revolution at KKK

By Joy Angelica Subido Philstar.com

IT'S interesting how acronyms can mean distinct things in different cultures. While KKK in the western world may refer to an organization with strong racist leanings, in Philippine history it stands for a nationalistic movement that sought freedom and a better way of life for Filipinos. Thus, while one would expect redneck cuisine in a restaurant called KKK in the Americas, one anticipates that the Filipino counterpart seeks to serve "revolutionary" Filipino cuisine. By innovating on hometown favorites, KKK Food Revolution serves out of the ordinary dishes that are in tune with the modern Filipino's heightened gustatory preferences. The restaurant specializes in traditional cooking with a contemporary twist.

"KKK really stands for *Kainan sa Kalye Kanluran*," explain owners Louie Gutierrez, John Villanueva, Al Purugganan, and Raoul Henson. Together with Anlyn Arce, the closely-knit group of friends came up with the name

because their first food outlet was located on West (*Kanluran*) Avenue. The diverse choices, appetizing presentation, and pricing of food in the restaurant could be taken as a reflection of the partners' various interests and artistic persuasions. Louie designs jewelry, Raoul is a physician specializing in ophthalmol-

ogy and John is a businessman. Anlyn belongs to the famous ice cream-making family and Al is an erstwhile college professor. The common denominator, says Louie, is that the fun-loving group enjoys good food and good company. The menu in the restaurant is culled mainly from favorite family dishes, and an extensive network of close friends unselfishly shared other recipes.

While each partner is partial to his favorite dish in the restaurant, Al is the passionate cook whose domain is the kitchen. "My contribution to the menu is to add an Asian twist to Filipino cooking," he says. "I thought that these would have been the original flavors had we not been colonized and influenced by the West."

Thus, the food at KKK may also be considered revolutionary because it somehow

rant's decor uses indigenous materials commonly used in traditional Filipino homes. Slender sticks of *arurug*, commonly used in provincial homes for fencing, are a prominent design element. An eye-catching mural in sepia tones covering one wall is a reproduction of a photograph featuring historical figures Jose Rizal, Felix Hidalgo, J. Pardo de Tavera, and Juan Luna. As in a typical Filipino home, where the attention of visitors is captured by an engaging hodgepodge of details, diners at KKK have many interesting things to look at and talk about while they wait for their food.

The food does not disappoint either. One can understand why *inihaw na liempo* bacon cut (P229.60) is a best-



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(Advertising Supplement)



Sinigang na Lechon



Bacalao Daing



Mango-Iced Tea-Sago

Photos courtesy of ourawesomeplanet.com/antondiaz

seeks to explore alternative paths that our food history could have taken. Still, says Al, "The spirit and the elements are still very *Pinoy*. We put the old and the new together and make sure that the essence is very Filipino."

Indeed, even the restau-

seller. The boneless strips of pork are tender and perfectly marinated so that they are just the right degree of salty and sweet. The even cara-

melization of the meat indicates that grilling was done over a controlled flame, and that someone in the kitchen took the effort to make sure that no singeing occurred. *Bistek* flakes (P190.40) or crisp shredded beef served with tomatoes, onions, and a tasty beefsteak sauce was the perfect accompaniment to hot and steaming rice.

Ensaladang inihaw na talong or eggplant that came with onions, tomatoes, and salted egg is a simple dish that went well with *lechon kawali* (P218.40). The latter could also be served *binagoongan*, as *tinokwa't baboy* with soybean cake, or with other healthy vegetables such as sliced green mangoes, firm, ripe red tomatoes, and faintly sweet *bagoong Balayan*. *Plapla na inihaw sa asin* is reminiscent of how we cook fish

in the farm during harvest season. *Tilapia* is encased in a thick covering of salt and baked in embers. When the salt has hardened, it is an indication that the fish is ready. The salt casing is cracked open and discarded, and the white flesh of the fish is steaming, moist, perfectly seasoned, and should be eaten immediately.

There is traditional *kare kareng baka*, cooked as I like it with a thickening agent of ground roasted peanuts and rice, and other favorites like crispy *pata*, chicken *inasal* and *laing sa gata*. It is not surprising that *sinigang na lechon* is another favorite. The delicious sour broth goes well with crispy *lechon*.

We were eager to taste the "revolutionary" fare but were waylaid by the familiar Filipino favorites. Future visits will

have to be devoted to trying garlic *pusit* cooked with oyster sauce, *wansuy* (cilantro) and garlic; *lechon manok* cooked with pineapple and curry; beef a la KKK (beef with red curry paste), and other dishes with an Asian twist. That can only happen if we are able to resist newfound favorites: *hito* (catfish) with a delicious, clean-tasting shrimp *burro* and *sinangag sa tinapa* at *itlog na maalat*. The fried fish with *tinapa* is perfect for those of us who, being oftentimes too harried with crazy schedules, or too lazy or to pick out the tiny fish bones, have to forego the treat.

KKK Food Revolution has branches at Level 3, Robinsons Place Midtown Wing, Ermita, Manila; 1126 Entertainment Mall, SM Mall of Asia, Bay Boulevard, Pasay City; and 74 West Avenue, Quezon City.

FILIPINO FLAVORS

'All You Kanin' and More at The Kanin Club

By Jennifer Ong Philstar.com

IN an instant, I found that perfect crunch. It was a sheer delight to sink my teeth into something crisp only to discover a little bit of something tender inside. I may have just been eating fried fish. But here at Kanin Club, it comes to you, opened up like a slowly blossoming flower, with the fish's head in bowed reverence to you.

Kanin Club pays homage to Filipino heritage and culture. From its stained-glass window touches of sea blue, Tuscan yellow, and jade green to its decor of rich wood tones and antique capiz-laden windows made into tables, this restaurant feels like an ancestral Filipino home that serves up good classic food, Filipino style.

Its chef Anthony Mendoza

has been the sole master of the kitchen in this restaurant's two-year foray. Joining



Lechon Kawali

Anthony on the management team of Kanin Club are his wife Emely, and Mariela Luna-Cancio and Antonio Cancio, who are also behind Cafe Breton.

How Kanin Club came to be is an interesting story. As weekend bikers usually make their way towards Cafe Breton for some hearty breakfast upon reaching Sta. Rosa, Laguna, these men would often ask if the restaurant

was serving any rice. Upon observing them, Anthony commented, "Now, they are the Kanin Club."

It has been two years now since Kanin Club first opened its doors in its original restaurant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. The restaurant has a second branch at Westgate Center in Filicity, Alabang.



Beefsteak Tagalog

With the opening of this second branch, Anthony is spicing up the Kanin Club menu

with more enticing dishes.

As you might expect, the Kanin Club menu offers various kinds of rice. There's the regular staple, plain Mindoro white rice, which you can enjoy as "All You Kanin" or in unlimited servings. For a healthier alternative, there's brown rice, which has quite a hearty bite in every grain. There are also different kinds of fried rice like *tinapa* rice, *chorizo* rice, garlic rice, loaded fried rice, *daging* fried rice, *aligue* rice, *bagoong* rice, and Anthony's newest creation, the pork *sinigang sinangag* rice.

Of course, there's a whole lot more to entice you in Kanin Club's ten-part menu.

If you want to jump right into the seafood entrees, one name unfolds: *Binukadkad na Tilapia*. This dish

gives you a perfect crunch, with the fish sliced butterfly style before dunked into the fryer. And as Anthony recommends, "Try this with some green mango salad that's both a bit sour and sweet."

Digging into the seafood repertoire, you must also have some seafood *kare-kare*. This is a plateful of prawns, mussels, and squid cooked in savory peanut sauce. Then there's the spicy *tahong* or mussels cooked in garlic, shrimp paste, and coconut milk.

From savory, you can move on to something just a tad sweet. How about the all-time Filipino favorite *lumpiang sariwa*? This dish is a new take on the classic with the fresh vegetable spring roll featuring lots of sauteed beansprouts and served with some sweet sauce and peanuts. A must-try is the

refreshing tomato, onion, cilantro, and *kesong puti* salad, which is mixed with some tangy vinaigrette.

Onto to the meat side, there's the crispy *liempo* for starters, which comes with a trio of soy sauce, vinegar, and sweet chili sauce. Then try chef Anthony's crispy *dinuguan* and his personal favorite, chicken curry.

Anthony is quick to confess that he was never a culinary student. Everything he learned, he learned from taste and from spending a lot of time in the kitchen with his family. And this burning passion for cooking and experimenting with food is evident in his well-thought-out menu at Kanin Club.

After all that rice and food, hopefully, you still have some room to yield to some sweet temptations. Like *turon*, that

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