



Dozen's Red Clay *Molding Quality with Innovation*

It doesn't take long to spot the shop through the row of pottery stalls along the national highway in Taboc, San Juan, La Union. There's no mistaking it.

Red Clay is the name. Of the shop, that is.

But the distinction isn't much in the name nor in the store. For there is nothing fancy about a plain wooden structure with the typical galvanized iron roofing. The goods on display gave *Red Clay* away. Dozen Baduyen, the owner, made sure of that.

The uniqueness of the products boasts of the creator's innovativeness not dispensing with quality. *Red Clay* brags of designs and products that seem to have never crossed the minds of its counterparts. Dozen has introduced an entirely new dimension in pottery with his innovations.



From retailer to producer

Like the line of pottery shops that barangay Taboc in San Juan is known for, *Red Clay* started as a retailer, buying clay products from Vigan, Ilocos Sur and as far as Pampanga then selling them. At times, Dozen would buy from neighbors.

This setup would bring him and his family a gross income of P20,000 to P30,000 monthly. From that, he would net about P6,000 to P7,000, an amount which barely sufficed the needs of a family. The shop was *Pick 'n Pay* then. Until the daily needs of his growing family started piling up, expanding his business was out of the question.

The concept of personally producing his own pottery did not cross his mind until a relative visited and referred a program of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) designed to cater to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) like *Red Clay*.

In 2003, *Red Clay's* road to success was defined. Buying his relative's advice, Dozen found himself before the doorsteps of DOST La Union. There, he learned of the agency's programs created to provide financial and technical assistance to different industries like food processing, furniture, home decors and fashion accessories, metals and engineering, and others. Dr. Ismael Gurtiza, DOST La Union Director presented to him the agency's role, programs and services. It was then that Dozen met the Small Enterprise Upgrading Program (SETUP).

Up with DOST

Although introduced in 2003, SETUP hadn't accommodated Dozen until 2005. The two-year interval was due to unavailable funds which supported an already large number of beneficiaries.

The program brought in appealing prospects for Dozen and his pottery business. With SETUP's ready arm to brace *Red Clay's* technical needs, the idea of producing his own pottery amused him. So, exactly two years after formally coming across SETUP, the idea finally became reality.

As early as 2003, albeit the unavailability of slot for him, Dr. Gurtiza made sure that Dozen would have prepared all requirements for his SETUP application once resources were on hand. And in 2005, *Red Clay* welcomed DOST in its thresholds.

Starting off with P50,000 capital, Dozen embarked on a new dimension in his trade. He finally broke free from the buy-and-sell arrangement and went on to creating his own distinctive earthenware, employing the designs only he is known for.

DOST La Union, with its indispensable part in making into reality dreams of countless enterprises, provided equipment for Dozen's pottery production. *Red Clay* was granted two jiggering machines for mold designs and an extruder/mixer both amounting to up to P200 thousand. The agency also helped *Red Clay* in its kiln improvement.

Learning to bake clay was not difficult for Dozen, especially that equipment needed for his business were already provided. And so Dozen started his love affair with clay. He has gone to as far as Baroro, Bacnotan, La Union in finding his kind of clay. As he mastered his craft, his creativity became better. New products and new designs that only sold at *Red Clay* popped out and attracted buyers, much to the envy of neighboring

Ilocos S&T Trends



Jiggering machines

shops who nearly didn't have anything different to sell.

"I often hear unconstructive remarks from neighbors about my shop but each time, I am challenged," said Dozen, thankful of DOST's trainings and seminars where he learned product labels, costing, bookkeeping, financial management, and others.



Mixer

Dozen explained that with the assistance provided by DOST La Union, he was able to optimize his innovativeness, diverging from the usual pottery products like clay ovens and pots. He has decided to create a new identity in the industry, venturing even in the creation of home decors made of clay.

"This (home decors) is what I consider my best product," smiled Dozen. "My passion is continuously burning. I want to find more ways to create new things. I can feel my thirst for trainings. Thanks to DOST-La Union who served everything on a platter."

Red Clay was first made known to La Union through a trade fair, and soon became a mainstay on dozen others that came after. Every year, the shop is able to show off its undeniable wealth in designs through the *RIMAT TI AMIANAN*, an annual trade fair that showcases

La Union's products.

Big change

Not long after DOST took its cathedra in *Red Clay's* affairs, the big difference in Dozen and his family's life became evident. From the original two workers Dozen maintained during his buy-and-sell days, the shop's manpower is now up by six (6) more. He disclosed that *Red Clay's* gross income for each year now ranges from P800 to a crispy P900 thousand.

Red Clay has to thank DOST for this sudden boom in revenue. "What I greatly appreciate about DOST is that they scout for struggling businesses to assist," revealed Dozen. "I believe they rake entire La Union for small and medium enterprises to serve."

This of course, is true. Dr. Gurtiza said his team would allot one day each week, usually a Friday, to just drive through the main highway to hunt for potential DOST recipients. Spotting a possibility, they would pull over and have chitchat with the business' owner, fishing for likely recipients of DOST grants.

Dozen admits that with DOST's intervention in his pottery business, he was able to discover and eventually practice and polish his talent in the arts. Through the agency's assistance, *Red Clay* prides of a production founded on quality and innovativeness, things that its counterparts are definitely short of.

Add-on

With lampshades, home decors, and lamps crowding *Red Clay's* display rack, Dozen wants to craft and introduce more artworks made of clay. He also wants to have metal as an "add-on" to his clay products. He said that for this, he needs to expand his workplace and appropriate equipment. For the seemingly infinite list of dreams he has for *Red Clay* and its future, including the sure heap of drawbacks along the way, Dozen bears the look of someone immune to problems. "I'm not at all worried," Dozen exclaimed. "I have DOST with me."

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