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DOST Upgrades Business of Vigan Hopia Baker

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Ferdinand Ruizan, a strong, determined family man of Vigan City began building his Ruizan Food Products with a five-kilo flour he baked into pandesal.

He sold his pandesal in his own barangay of Paratong. 'Pandesal' is the most popular yeast-raised bread in the Philippines.

After a month of selling pandesal, he asked a relative the recipe of 'hopia'. With the borrowed recipe, he began to sell 'hopia baboy' and 'hopia mongo' in his barangay and adjacent barangays. In few weeks he was known for his delicious 'hopia'.

Hopia literally means, according to Wikipedia, 'good pastry.' This is a popular Philippine and Indonesian bean-filled pastry introduced by Fijianese immigrants in urban centers of these countries in the turn of the twentieth century.

Mung-bean hopia or *hopyang munggo* sometimes referred to as "sweet hopia" in Tagalog, is filled with sweet split mung-bean paste.

Hopyang baboy is filled with a savoury bread-crumble paste with candied wintermelon, flavoured with green onions, and enriched with candied pork backfat (hence its name)

DOST comes to Ferdinand's aide

Believing in the good market of baked products, Ferdinand attended seminars to learn more about breads and other bakery products. And asked friends and relatives who are into baking for tips. After this, he approached Ramon Sumabat, the DOST Ilocos Sur Provincial Director, for assistance.

After evaluation, he was granted PhP178,815.20 for appropriate packaging materials, oven and a stainless steel cooling rack. For his part, Ruizan improved his production area, and acquired a stainless steel working table.

The new label and package

The new label and packaging materials provided by DOST in September 2011 enhanced the finished product's over-all quality. It improved the products' appearance and presentation, and gave the firm identity in the market. Ruizan said the new packaging is still on its promotional stage. With the new package he hopes to penetrate additional market outlets like supermarkets and groceries.

After DOST aid, his firm expanded its product line that include mammon, Spanish bread, and other baked goods. The gross sales increased by 65%. The bakery is now serving three public markets in the province. It has hired additional workers, two for production and two sellers.

Government does duty 100%

Ferdinand said that for him the government is doing its duty – 100% – in uplifting the lives of Pinoys. Without the

government aid he would not have all that he has today with his bakery.

His first dream was simple – to earn an honest living for his family. And he can say now that this was fulfilled because not only he can provide now the basic needs of his family. He is able to give jobs to other people.

Good manufacturing practices

To follow the standards of good quality products, he trained his workers himself. He taught them the proper handling of products as he learned in seminars such as the Good Manufacturing Practices by DOST. He is careful not to over produce to keep on serving freshly baked products, which is the key to success in food business.

To maintain the quality of his products he closely maintains cleanliness or sanitation of his workers and the work place.

Today, in his bakery at the Vigan public market he sells fresh baked products and snacks. He has eight staff, two bakers excluding him, two baker aids, three salesladies, and one driver.

He is always supervising the production through the sales. When big orders come he is firm on very close supervision. His wife stays all the time with the baker.

DOST, he said, is very helpful. The office is always checking on the production process. And this is good for the quality of the products. He is satisfied with the aid, and advices. With DOST aid, the processing of his products is much better than before. He says they are tastier and cleaner.

He believes that it's better to be with his family even if he is not earning as much compared to those working abroad. Although he believes that eventually, as he foresees his business in the future, he'll be earning more than some of those working overseas.

Patience, diligence work with DOST aid

He advises those who want to avail of DOST program that they should have a vision. But adds that they must also have enough guts. They must work hard, have patience and enthusiasm. They should prove first they are worthy to get the DOST aid.

He could prove his business is improving because slowly he is able to buy the necessary equipment in baking without borrowing money. He has begun saving now. Compared to other businesses he considers his has bigger growth and improvement with DOST aid.

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