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Finished products - Tablea

75-year old Ilocana Produces Native Made Better with DOST

One of the working elderlies in the province who can serve as model to residents, the youth, and families, is a strong Ilocana – Herminia “Miniang” Makil of Salcedo, Ilocos Sur. She has been making ‘cacao tablea’ since 1977.

Miniang, is the 75-year old who molds ground cacao into native chocolate tablets that is popular among fellow residents, and the local and foreign tourists at the Heritage Village in Vigan City.

The DOST SETUP and Miniang’s Chocolates

Molding the chocolate tablets for Miniang Food Products requires the use of hands. In 2012, however, the Department of Science and Technology’s Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (DOST SETUP) made tablea making easier.



Cacao Grinder



Multiple Ring Gas Burner with LPG Tank and Regulator

Miniang Food Products received a grinder of cocoa beans, a multiple ring gas burner for even toasting of the beans, an LPG tank system, and two stainless steel working tables.

The help from DOST resulted in high quality product. Mrs. Makil said that with the machine the ground beans are smoother and well mixed. Grinding is shortened, and more beans are ground per hour. This lowered her production cost. More customers came in because the quality of the chocolate tablets is now better with a good balance of sweet and bitter taste. So, more products were delivered to her regular customers in various stores, restaurants, and hotels at the Vigan Heritage Village. And other customers visit her more often.

Her workers are happier because their job became lighter than before the help of DOST. Business operations became regular. And she considers her products as superior to those similar with hers because of the increase in orders.

She remembers her hardship before DOST aid. Grinding done in other towns was taxing for her particularly on rainy days.

Before DOST gave her the production facilities, she had to comply with the requirement of a separate working/production area beside her home.

She said that DOST enabled her and all budding entrepreneurs to be more interested and happier in their line of business. Now they experience the good effect of the program in their business and their daily life.

Miniang does not see herself retiring from her choco business as of this day. When there are trade fairs in the province, or trainings and seminars in the region, she is there. She says she loves learning. This is why she looks young, and moves with enthusiasm where her business is concerned.

How Miniang Started Her Cacao Life

A supportive daughter-in-law in her early years of marriage, she always followed what her mother-in-law taught her in making chocolates. This way she was trained well with her husband.

She and her husband began the cacao business. One worker goes around upland towns to buy native cacao seeds of the ereuleo and forester varieties. One sells and promotes the products during trade fairs. Her daughter assist her in preparing, redrying and segregating seeds as to sizes before roasting. Miniang went on improving her product until sales increased every year.

The chocolate business began when they realized that selling cacao seeds was not enough to augment their expenses in harvesting, hauling, cleaning and drying them. This lack of profit made other cacao planters cut their trees for rambutan. But she and her husband stayed with their cacao as they talked with DOST and other government agencies for assistance.

Today they gather native cacao seeds from other towns to add to their Brazilian seeds and produce chocolate tablets, native 'kisses' and raw dried cacao seeds frequented by Pangasinenses.

Patience, determination, diligence – these are what built the chocolate business of Miniang. She buys the seeds or beans at P150-P200 per ganta and this yields 20 rolls of the chocolate tablets which she sells at P50 per roll.

She now has two hectares planted with cacao. Believing on the good quality of her product, based on positive comments of customers, and the increasing orders from various parts of the province, she goes on adding to the long years of improving her chocolates.

Her good qualities compete with the sweetness of her chocolates. And these helped her in receiving awards for the good quality of her product at the Kannawidan Ylocos Festival at the Ilocos Sur in 2012.

Miniang thanks the Almighty God for His blessings, her family for their endless support, and the Department of Science and Technology Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (DOST-SETUP). Also for the seminars and trainings on good manufacturing practices and occupational safety and health standards, among others.

As she walks through the years, she said that she does not feel tired although she has to slow down when walking. The joy in her eyes when she narrates the steps in making her chocolates speaks of her optimism in her choice of business and kind of life.

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