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Ilocos Sur Sisters Build Rice Cakes Firm with DOST



Rice cakes, otherwise known as royal bibingka, built these sisters' business, The Sisters Royal Bibingka, with the aid of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) of Ilocos region, particularly the Science and Technology Center in Ilocos Sur.

Mr. Ramon Sumabat, the Provincial S&T Director of Ilocos Sur, said that today the bibingka shop which the three sisters – Marina Paiste, Julita Pico, and Veronica Ramirez, is producing up to more than 500 boxes of rice cakes a day from 30 boxes back in 1999.

The DOST rescued the sisters' need of equipment. It built an oven, and provided a mechanical mixer. The mechanical mixer made mixing a breeze, ushering fast production process and increase in number of rice cakes produced a day. It also gave new product packaging and labeling that created identity of the rice cakes, and maintained its quality.

Water analysis and shelf-life testing by DOST further pushed the quality of the rice cakes. The information gave the owners the idea that their products remain fresh in seven days. Water analysis was done to test the suitability of water being used in the production to produce high quality food. And to test the water's fitness for human consumption.



The interventions are all part of the Small Enterprises Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) of the DOST. The program seeks to improve the productivity and competitiveness of small and medium businesses. This is through manpower training, technical assistance and consultancy services; design of functional packages and labels; assistance in the establishment of product standards including testing, and provision of funds for technology acquisition.

Today when you pass by the town of Bantay going to Manila, you can see in the right window of your vehicle, The Sisters Bibingka restaurant and another house for empanada and other food products. On your left, you can see the first bibingka bungalow or production area and where other product lines are also sold.

Back then Marina said that there were days when they could hardly sell their 30 boxes a day. Today, customers frequently drop by their stores, and middlemen buy in bulk for sale in the cities of San Fernando, Laoag and Baguio, and other provinces. Raw materials come to their factory right from the suppliers of Cagayan, Abra, San Fernando City of La Union and Candon City.

This success rooted from the sisters' training under their aunt who owns the original, the first royal bibingka maker of Metro Vigan, the Tongsons. Marina shared that she is much grateful to her aunt whom she learned much in making rice cakes or 'bibingka. The enthusiasm, diligence and perseverance to start their own business led her and her sisters to move on from the training under their aunt to what is today "The Sisters Royal Bibingka".

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