



Ilocos S & T Trends



ENTERED AS SECOND-CLASS MAIL MATTER AT THE SAN FERNANDO CITY, LA UNION POSTAL OFFICE

Volume 4, Issue No. 7

ISSN No. 0118-0924

DECEMBER 2011

This Family Proves the Government Can Improve a Pinoy's Life

A Pinoy can have quality life. He can enjoy what people from developed countries do enjoy. Not as an overseas worker but simply as Pinoy working right here in his own country.

"Namaymayat met laeng ti agnaed ken agnegosio ti bukod a lugar. Ditoy a kadenna ti pamilya uray rigat ken nam-ay." (It is better to live and do business in our own land. Here we are with our family in suffering and contentment.) This is the poignant note of Flora Ubaldo of Joma's Tower Cafe in Vigan City on working in the Philippines.

The family of Flora and husband Jowyn Ubaldo is a proof that here in the Philippines residents can have improved lives through the national government's programs, particularly those of the Ilocos Sur Science and Technology Center of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

This husband and wife team is the chief baker of one of the better baked food houses in Vigan, and even in Ilocos Sur. The elegant taste and texture of their chiffon cakes and pastries is up the ladder of quality baked goods. "For decades now that my own family has been eating them, we could easily pass them equal to the famous and expensive national brands", quips Flora.

Located at Gregorio del Pilar street, the couple's cafe is now a busy cheerful place where customers come and go carrying the orangy boxes. Peeping through them, and looking at the display cabinet that welcomes guests we could see their famous banana leaf lined torta which is imitated by some bakers in the city. Chiffon, fondant, and fruit cakes for all occasions are sold by order.

Stuffed pastries such as empanadita, masa podrida, cream puff, bolero, inipit and pineapple delight and meat products like morcon, rellenong bangus are always available for diners and take out, ; processed meat such as morcon, rellenong manok and fish products.

Joma's Tower Café Early On

"Tower Cafe was established way back in 1960s at Plaza Burgos, west of the Saint Paul Cathedral bell tower, now occupied by a food chain. Years passed by, and Tower Cafe maintained its name by catering to the needs of its customers. it was famous for its pork barbecue, cakes and pastries and miki molo," shares Flora. I remember in my childhood that pork barbecue was popularized by Tower. And that bagan the household name "Tower"

To expand into the food business and cater to all occasions Jowyn and Flora decided to include rellenong manok, and processed fish in their list of exquisite products. They also do food catering for any occasion

Joma's customers kept growing and the couple had no easy time producing their goods. They have to get help. From the government.

DOST Ilocos Sur, an Angel to Joma's

In 2010 DOST Ilocos Sur came to Joma's Tower Cafe like an angel. DOST Ilocos Sur 'levelled up' the cafe in terms of increase in the number of products per day, the lovely orangy boxes, and the outstanding way it follows good manufacturing practices. This is due to the proper packaging materials, and upgrading of equipment such as two gas oven standard type with thermometer and one cassava grinder and one cake mixer.

Instantly, 10% increase in gross sales was recorded comparing the first semester of the year to that of the last. Jowyn said that the luscious orange packages lured more customers, and clearly advertised the quality of its products, defining them as Joma's.





Equipments acquired from DOST's SETUP project
(Bakery oven and cake mixer)

According to Mr Ramon Sumabat, Provincial Director of the Ilocos Sur Science and Technology Center of DOST, the Ubaldo couple built a new production house as their equity to the project. Found in an adjacent barangay to the poblacion, it provides better place for quality products. Exposure to food hazards is easily lessened and good manufacturing practices (GMP) were readily observed.

The production rate and capacity of Joma's increased by 100% with the two new bakery ovens. Labor cost was reduced although orders increased. The worker's health improved as they no longer work overtime until late hours when orders file up.

The 30 quartz capacity cake mixer with a power of 1.5 kw lessens mixing time and energy use, and uploads mixing capacity. Before DOST's help, three 500 w kitchen cake mixers with 5 quartz capacity each were used. Ingredients per product were mixed separately in about 5 minutes. Now, the new mixer uniformly and thoroughly mixes ingredients in single loading in less than 3 minutes.

Mixing time is reduced by 100%. Ingredients preparation down by 200% . Energy saved is three folds. Production capacity increased by 100% in a single loading of ingredients, increasing Joma's production volume.

The 120 kg/hr capacity cassava grinder reduces grinding time, grinding fee, transportation and labor. Before DOST, the quality of products was compromised as Joma's had to get its cassava tubers grinded in the public market. Today, the ingredients are surely fresh and clean producing delicious cassava cakes.



The improved product packaging

Finally, the facelifting of Joma's packaging from a simple unlabelled box and cellophane cover to a clearly Joma's label design box maintained the quality of the products even when transported. Joma's cakes and pastries in these delicious boxes can win against the more ambitious national labels.

Flora says that after DOST's intervention, the quality of their products improved. The volume of orders and products increased. The demand of customers are met, so with their satisfaction in the improved packaging. "Due to improvement of product packaging, the demand of products increases everyday."

How about the productivity of the workers? "The demand and orders of customers are met 100% daily. The workers efficiently perform their duties and responsibilities as being directed. They were also trained in good housekeeping, and good manufacturing practices."

To those who want to start their own business Flora advises them to "have passion in your field of endeavor. Love your business and plan ahead for an organized and progressive business." To those who want to avail of the DOST assistance she says, "Start a business. Establish a good business plan."

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