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# Ilocos S & T Trends



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## The House that *Royal Bibingka* Built



The place used to be a machine shop, an old auto-repair shop. *Goldlink* it was called. It didn't actually suit its name. Everything in the shop was far from gold. Not in color and never in gains. Everything was of rust and rust it had been for more than 10 grueling years it struggled to survive.

It was a family business. The Zamoranos could think of no other, not when the brothers were good at machines. What made matters worse was that profit was seasonal. During the farming months, returns were low. It was usually the time for enrollment of students so vehicle repairs were less prioritized. In the months of November to January, profit was good.

In a highly metropolitan area like the City of San Fernando, La Union, a business needs more than itself to endure in the stream of thriving trades and industries. Otherwise, the enterprise will die a natural death. And so it happened to *Goldlink*. It eventually expired.

## *DOST: the link to gold*



Cooling racks for newly baked bibingka

In 2007, a bakeshop was born. It started as a small oven inside the home of the Zamoranos siblings. After *Goldlink's* loss, the idea of plowing into another enterprise was a persistent concern, especially for a family who has long subsisted through business. One factor considered was the demand for the product or service to be sold. And so the family came out with the food industry.

As far as *Goldlink* days, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) had been espousing them throughout, giving them grants and other assistance covered under various science and technology programs. The role of the DOST in the survival of the auto-repair shop for more than 10 dragging years went beyond mere funding and sponsorship. It was almost a shadow that refused to part. The former never fell short of sustaining the latter with facts and principles on how to keep the business not only alive but kicking.

And even as the auto shop turned into a bakery, the shadow stayed. Even when oil and lubricants and the customarily greasy hands and unclean fingernails disappeared all at once, replaced by butter and flour and aprons and a workplace which required a cleaner environment.

At first, the bakery was part of a house which could hardly accommodate a family of 10, not to mention the kids that inevitably grew in number with the years. Manuel, the second-born of the eight Zamoranos siblings took the lead in managing the bakeshop that was to lead in the supply of bread, brownies, Royal Bibingka, and other pastries in Northern Luzon and in some parts of Metro Manila.

Like in *Goldlink* days, the family sought the assistance of DOST-La Union through its provincial director Mel Gurtiza. Although the agency caters to enterprises needing financial support and other forms of assistance, certain requirements are to be met by the business seeking aid. And the small bakeshop simply did not meet the conditions. For one, the oven needed to be housed in a separate facility. The DOST demanded specific designs, measurements for sizes and areas not to include complicated paperwork to be settled and provided.

So the first move was to construct another building for the bakery. Dr. Gurtiza offered to provide the design of the facility, letting Manuel choose from several layout options.

In months, the construction was complete. The newly built facility adequately accommodates the distinct units where the family's 10 workers are daily absorbed in their own tasks. From the milling, mixing of raw materials, cooking, cooling/racking, packaging, warehousing and distribution.

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Planetary Mixer



Band sealer for plastic packaging



Rice Grinder /Flour mill for glutinous

Having complied with the building requirements for good manufacturing practices as required by DOST, the Zamoranos' family's dream seemed within an arm's reach. And this was a start of a chain of assistance from the agency.

DOST's Small Enterprise Upgrading Program (SET-UP) has made countless enterprises nationwide prosper through its various services and assistance modes. The programs under SET-UP has no doubt stabilized and sustain a wide range of enterprises, from agri-based processing to metals and engineering to furniture to gifts and house decors to aqua marine and horticulture industries.

With *Mariz Bibingka and Bakeshop*, a total financial assistance of P250 thousand pesos was granted by DOST La Union to the business, refundable in three years with zero interest. The financial grant was used to buy equipment necessary for the bakery. These included the *planetary mixer, rotary oven, stainless steel dough mixer and packaging material*.

DOST's hand over the Zamoranos' bakeshop did not stop at providing the required equipment for a full-blown business. It is responsible for the packaging and labeling designs of the *Royal Bibingka* and other products. Chains of on-site trainings, seminars were provided by the agency to the bakery's workers as well as the owners themselves. "Almost monthly, DOST conducts seminars to us," said Manuel who had recently undergone *Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Cleaner Production, and Energy Audit*. "We have their full support through trainings and monitoring which they do weekly," Manuel added.

The first months showed promising signs of a right decision to venture in the food industry. Profits surged to as much as P20 thousand a month. With Manuel's brother Cesar as the master baker, soon the *bibingka* multiplied into other products like *otap, puto seco, eggnog, cracklets, and mamon*, all of which are highly demanded by customers because of their affordability and delectableness.

With their market extending from La Union to Ilocos Norte, and even to as far as some parts of Metro Manila, they often fall short of goods to deliver, especially that demands come from both near and far.

## 'Manna'

The Royal Bibingka and all the other goodies seemed to have turned into *manna* upon DOST's intervention with nonstop gains for the Zamoranos family. Manuel revealed that average net profit for each month ranges from P20 to P30 thousand.

"For many years we were mired in debt, but now, we don't owe even a single cent," grinned Manuel. All because of DOST's help.

The Zamoranos family has just built a three-story house towering over other homes in their area. The design is impressive, matching the fine furniture in every part of the house. With pride, Manuel said, "*This is the house that Royal Bibingka built.*"

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