

# Kusina ni Tantsa



**Empowering Communities Through  
Undervalued and Climate-Resilient Crops**





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### **Author**

Khristine Kaye Maguddayao

### **Recipe Contributors**

Amelia Detera Vilbar  
Billy Flor  
Genierose Laguyo  
Jose Sanie “Dodoy” Camral  
Joentina “Tipay” Ong  
Ma. Kesia Valgona  
Maylyn Piera  
Merlinda Consolacion  
Yolanda Maquiling

### **Researchers**

Khristine Kaye Maguddayao  
Sidney Ermeo  
Irish Gwyneth Habig

### **Production team**

**Editor:** Irish Gwyneth Habig  
**Illustrator:** Bernie Remoquillo  
**Designer and layout artist:** Jel Evangeline Montoya

### **Photo credit**

SEARICE  
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**Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE)**  
14D Maaalahanin St., Teachers Village West  
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1101  
(63-2) 8922-6710; (63-2) 73730530  
Website: [www.searice.org.ph](http://www.searice.org.ph)  
Email: [searice@searice.org.ph](mailto:searice@searice.org.ph)

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# *Kusina ni Tantsa*

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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



International Treaty  
on Plant Genetic Resources  
for Food and Agriculture

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Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (BSF-ITPGRFA) for making this initiative possible.

Through this book, we celebrate the richness of plant genetic diversity and its role in nourishing both our tables and our communities. May these pages remind us that every seed, like every story, has the power to nurture both land and home.

## Foreword

Food connects us to our past, nurtures our present, and shapes our future. Recipes and cooking techniques passed down through generations link us to our ancestry and places of origin. These traditions form a core part of our personal and collective identity. Our love for food reflects our *bayanihan* spirit—strengthening social bonds, fostering belonging, and supporting shared well-being. This book celebrates these traditions, honoring food practices deeply rooted in culture and heritage.

Many of these practices rely on fresh, locally sourced ingredients that are nutritious yet often undervalued. But with the growing threat of genetic erosion, countless plant varieties—and the knowledge, skills, and cultural practices tied to them—are at risk of disappearing.

Since the early 1990s, SEARICE has made the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources central to its mission. The alarming loss of plant diversity, highlighted during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, reinforced SEARICE's commitment to seed conservation. This led to efforts to collect and manage seeds and to train farmers in protecting traditional crops.

Over time, we learned that sustaining these efforts is difficult for smallholder farmers with limited resources. In response, SEARICE and its partners linked conservation with crop development and

value addition—approaches that encourage active use and, in turn, support long-term conservation. Nutrition and food culture naturally became powerful drivers of this work, especially for women who play a central role in their households' health and well-being.

Through the Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation (CBDC) program, SEARICE and its global partners published their first recipe book featuring traditional dishes from Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. *Kusina ni Tantsa* builds on this legacy, showing how each recipe carries culture, memory, and meaning. Drawing on her grounding in anthropology, the author invites readers not only to cook these dishes but to understand the stories that shape them.

May *Kusina ni Tantsa* remind us that every recipe we prepare is a conscious act of remembering and a step toward protecting both our history and our future. We hope this book inspires you to help conserve plant genetic resources through sustainable use—especially traditional and undervalued crops. In preserving our food culture, we help safeguard the diversity that supports our shared food sovereignty.

*Normita Ignacio*  
SEARICE, Executive Director

# The Art of Tantsa and Filipino Cooking

*This recipe book began simply with the idea of collecting and documenting recipes from SEARICE's farmer partners.*

At first, the plan sounded straightforward: gather the ingredients, note the steps, and list the measurements. But as we entered the kitchens of farmers and their families, we slowly realized that documenting local recipes was never just about ingredients or steps. It was about stories, memory, and the unspoken art that lives in every home kitchen.

In traditional recipe books, everything is precise. You'll see exact measurements, cooking times, and clear instructions down to the pinch of salt or the minute of stirring. It makes sense because recipes, after all, are meant to be replicated. But in many Filipino homes, cooking doesn't follow that rule. There are no measuring cups or spoons, no strict formulas—only a sense of *tantsa*.

When we asked, "*Ilang kilo po ang lulutuin?*" (How many kilos should we cook?), someone would simply say, "*Kung ilan ang kaya nating makain,*" meaning, "As much as we can finish."



A SEARICE staff member documents Pres. Dodoy as he demonstrates the steps in making *kayos* flour.



Above: Amelia and Grace, members of the Mailum Organic Village Association (MOVA), mash ube to prepare ube halaya.

Below: Members of the Tabucol Farmers Association (TFA) work together to demonstrate Nay Tipay's recipes for buchi and sweet munggo lumpia.



When we wondered how much sugar to add, the answer was always “*Tantsahin mo lang,*” or “Just estimate it.” And when we asked if anyone could really copy their recipe, they’d laugh and reply, “*Kaya kung may wido ka*”—Only if you have the instinct for it, that natural sense of taste and timing not everyone who holds a ladle is born with.

*Tantsa*, the act of estimating, of feeling your way through the pot, is the soul of Filipino cooking. It’s why your mother’s *adobo* tastes different from your grandmother’s, even if she learned it from her. The difference isn’t in the vinegar or soy sauce; it’s in the hands that stir, the memory that seasons, and the love that cannot be measured. It’s what transforms leftovers into new dishes and teaches you to swap ingredients and improvise. Each dish carries a fingerprint, an instinct that can’t be passed down exactly as it is.

That’s also why you won’t find measurements in this book. After all, love is impossible to quantify. You can only feel it, taste it, and recognize it in the small gestures—like the mother who cooks before sunrise to prepare her children’s breakfast, snacks, and lunch to make sure they won’t go hungry the whole day at school.

Home cooking holds many stories. For some, it means learning to cook out of necessity, because no one else is there to do it. For others, it is an act of care: cooking for family after a long day or for someone who is far from home. Some people think of *pinakbet* or *dinengdeng*, dishes that filled their childhood tables. Others remember the one dish they can never copy, the taste that belongs only to their mother’s hands. For others, it begins with gathering every ingredient before lighting the fire, as if having everything ready is their way of showing love.

In Filipino homes, *tantsa* is more than a way of cooking; it is a way of living. It is the quiet confidence that says, **I’ll find my way through this**. It is the trust that even without exact measurements, everything will somehow come together. It is believed that flavor, like memory, cannot be perfectly repeated but can always be remembered.

This is what this book celebrates: not precision, but presence. Not recipes, but relationships. A way of cooking that is never exact, always evolving, guided by instinct, and made whole by love.

# Meet Tantsa

Tantsa is the grandmother whose cooking no one can ever quite copy.

She's the mother who can turn almost nothing in the pantry into dinner like magic.

She's the aunt who insists on making *kakanin* every birthday and the *ninang* who starts a friendly debate because she's sure her version tastes better.

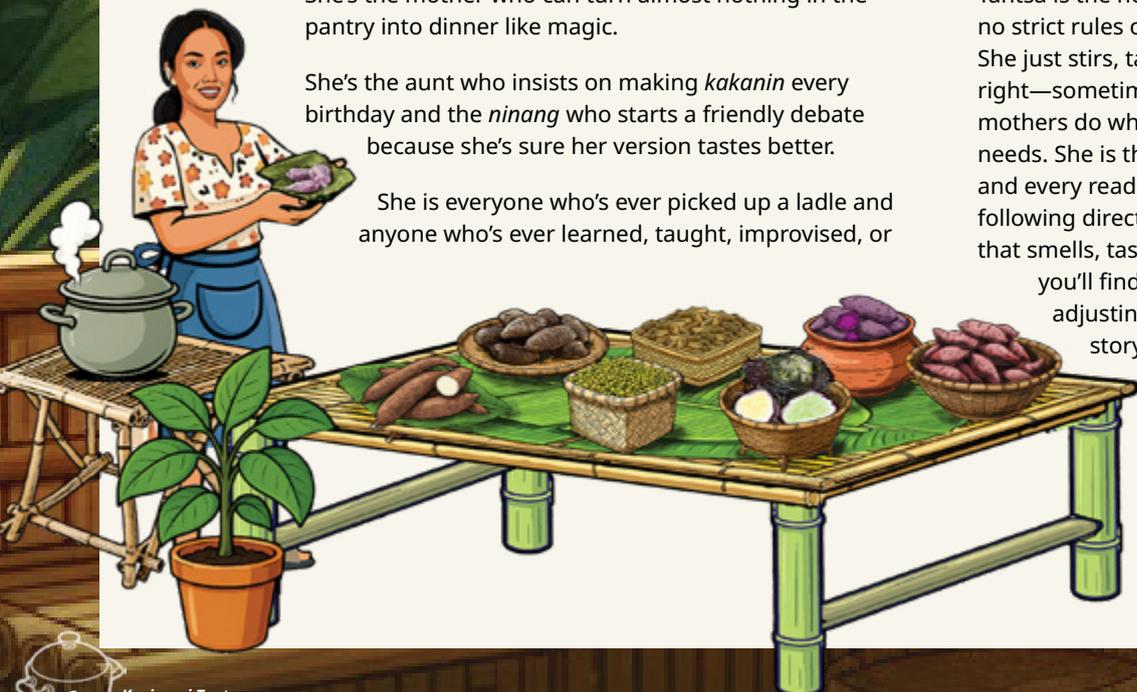
She is everyone who's ever picked up a ladle and anyone who's ever learned, taught, improvised, or

**loved through food.** She is both a seasoned cook who doesn't need a recipe and a beginner who is still learning.

Tantsa is the heart of Filipino home cooking. There are no strict rules or exact measurements in her kitchen. She just stirs, tastes, and makes changes until it feels right—sometimes with one hand on her hip, the way mothers do when they know exactly what a dish still needs. She is the spirit behind every cook in this book and every reader who knows that cooking isn't just about following directions; it's also about making something that smells, tastes, and feels like home. In these pages, you'll find her everywhere: tasting the stew, adjusting the fire, humming an old tune. She's the storyteller behind every crop and every dish.

And like all great home cooks, she'll always remind you of her one rule for good food:

**"Always add love to taste."**



# Undervalued and Climate-Resilient Crops

## Bisol

In Samar and Leyte, farmers say *bisol* grows bigger with simple rituals: plant it with a bamboo stick, plant during a full moon or high tide, or even plant while carrying a child on your back for larger corms.<sup>1</sup>

## Cassava

Brought from the Americas during Spanish rule, cassava was promoted as a famine reserve crop and later became an export starch.<sup>3</sup>

## Peanut

Introduced by Spanish missionaries and *conquistadores*, peanuts began as a colonial crop and were grown commercially in the Philippines as early as 1905.<sup>2</sup>

## Munggo

Originating in India around 1500 BCE, munggo spread through China and Southeast Asia over 3,000 years ago and eventually thrived in the Philippines as a hardy, nourishing crop.<sup>4</sup>

## Ube

In pre-Hispanic Bohol, ube once sustained communities through a great drought, earning its place as a sacred crop.<sup>5</sup>

## Kayos

During World War II in Mindanao, the Monuvu used kayos as both food and weapon.<sup>6</sup> They deceived Japanese soldiers into eating its toxic roots, a story that lives on as a symbol of indigenous resistance and survival.

## Sweet potato

Believed to have originated in Central and South America over 10,000 years ago,<sup>7</sup> the sweet potato reached the Philippines in the 16th century aboard Spanish ships from Mexico, carrying with it a long history of cultivation and exchange.<sup>8</sup>



# Bisol

*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*

Local names: Cocoyam, Yautia, Gabing San Fernando



This is *Bisol*, super soft and creamy! Just be sure to cook it well, because raw bisol can make your tongue itch. It's filling, comforting, and full of that lutong-bahay warmth, proof that the simplest roots can make a house feel like home.



## Why it's good for you

*Bisol* carries impressive medicinal and nutritional potential. Its leaves and corms contain compounds linked to improved cholesterol control, better bone health, cancer-fighting properties, and even support for reproductive health. With proper preparation to reduce natural acidity, *bisol* becomes a filling and versatile food for many communities.



## Health highlights

- ✓ **Manages diabetes:** Helps regulate blood sugar levels and prevents further damage to sperm cells in males caused by diabetes.
- ✓ **Supports bone health:** Rich in calcium, which helps prevent the progression of osteoporosis in traditional Brazilian communities.
- ✓ **Has anti-cancer properties:** Studies have shown that *Bisol* inhibits the growth of leukemia cells and the risk of bowel cancer.



# Kayos

*Dioscorea hispida*

Local names: Nami, Kayos, kurot, karot/kalot, kollut, intoxicating yam



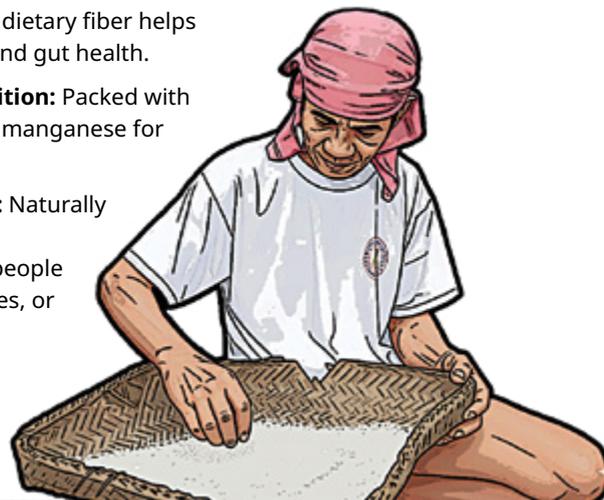
This is *Kayos*, the quiet survivor. Long ago, when rice ran out, people gathered it from the wild—boiling, grating, or roasting it to keep families fed. Its flavor is earthy, its roots are strong, and it has always stood for resilience. Even now, it thrives by the rivers and forests, quietly feeding those who still remember it. Slice it thin, fry it crisp, mash it soft. Kayos is food that endures, proof that life always finds a way to nourish itself.

## Why it's good for you

*Kayos* is a nutritious root crop long valued by Indigenous communities, especially during times of scarcity. Although it is naturally poisonous when raw, proper detoxification makes it a safe, nourishing, and versatile food. It's a gluten-free, fiber-rich starch that offers a healthier alternative to common flours, and its vitamins and minerals support steady energy and overall well-being.

## Health highlights<sup>10</sup>

- ✓ **Provides steady energy:** Rich in complex carbohydrates that fuel the body for longer periods.
- ✓ **Supports digestion:** High dietary fiber helps maintain good digestion and gut health.
- ✓ **Strengthens overall nutrition:** Packed with vitamin C, potassium, and manganese for daily body functions.
- ✓ **Good for restricted diets:** Naturally gluten-free, low in fat and cholesterol, and ideal for people with celiac disease, diabetes, or heart-friendly diets.



# A Story of Survival

**Jose Sanie “Dodoy” Camral (61), Yolanda Maquiling (55), and Merlinda Consolacion (58)**, Ballo Mainit Association members, showed how to prepare two traditional foods that have long sustained upland communities: *kayos* flour and stuffed *bisol*.

For most households today, *bisol* is cooked in simple, familiar, and comforting dishes that require little more than boiling, simmering, and sweetening. But stuffed *bisol*, a recipe that demands time, patience, and careful preparation, is now mostly remembered by elders like Pres. Dodoy, Yolanda, and Merlinda. Once a regular presence on the table, it has slowly faded as families shifted to easier *bisol* dishes. Yet for upland communities, stuffed *bisol* carried real importance, serving as a staple substitute whenever corn harvests failed, standing alongside *kamote*, *kayos*, and banana as one of their most reliable foods.

Yolanda shared that when she was younger, her mother sometimes cooked *bisol* by mixing it with different vegetables or with pork. She explained that upland communities, which lived without refrigerators or electricity, were not used to sweet dishes because they relied more on salt to help preserve food. This is why stuffed *bisol* can be prepared sweet, salty, or mildly seasoned, depending on what the household prefers.

Pres. Dodoy, the president of the association, began farming at eight years old. Their family planted corn, bananas, various root crops, and vegetables. He also recalled that in 1973, during a period of extreme scarcity, *kayos* became their main source of food. One way they made *kayos* edible was by processing it into *kayos* flour. He said that after squeezing out the liquid during processing, the *kayos* must not get wet from rain and must be air-dried properly. If not processed correctly, *kayos* can darken, change in taste, and develop an unpleasant smell. By sharing how they prepared *bisol* and *kayos* through the years, they show that every step, ingredient, and memory forms part of their community's story of survival.

*From left to right: Yolanda, Merlinda, and Dodoy*



# Stuffed Bisol



## Ingredients:

### Bisol

Coconut milk (gata)

Young coconut

Sugar (or condensed milk with vanilla, or salt—depending on taste)

Fresh coconut water

- 1. Gather and Wash:** Collect the *bisol*, wash thoroughly, and peel.
- 2. Split the Corm:** Cut the *bisol* in half and take note of which halves belong together so they can be reassembled properly later.

- 3. Remove the Flesh:** Scoop or grate out the inner flesh using a spoon or grater.



- 4. Prepare the Filling:**
  - Mix the removed flesh with grated young coconut.
  - Add sugar or condensed milk for sweetness, or a bit of salt for a savory version.
  - Because the young coconut adds volume, there will usually be extra filling. This leftover mixture can be wrapped in banana leaves and made into *alupi* or *suman*.

- 5. Stuff the Bisol:** Place the mixture back into the corm, filling the space between the paired halves.



- 6. Prepare the Coconut Milk:** To make the coconut milk that will be used for cooking, grate a mature coconut and mix it with fresh coconut water instead of plain water. This produces richer, more flavorful *gata*.

- 7. Assemble for Cooking:** Arrange the stuffed *bisol* in a pot or cauldron.



- 8. Cook in Coconut Milk:** Pour the prepared coconut milk into the pot and simmer until the *bisol* becomes tender and the filling absorbs the flavor of the *gata*.
- 9. Add love to taste, serve, and enjoy!**

# Kayos Flour



## Ingredients:

*Kayos*

This flour serves as the base for porridge, cakes, cookies, and other recipes that stretch food supplies during lean months.

Kayos processing requires precision because the raw tuber contains toxins that must be removed.

1. **Peel, Slice, and Wash:** Peel the *kayos*, slice them very thinly, and wash them immediately in running water. This step is crucial because running water helps remove the sap and toxins that can cause severe allergies, difficulty breathing, or even death. Washing is done continuously for up to four days, or until you are sure the poison is gone.
2. **The Thinner the Better:** Thin slices allow the toxins to wash out faster and more completely.
3. **Dry Under the Sun:** Spread the slices out to air-dry under the sunlight.
  - You can store these for future use, but do not place them in plastic or enclosed spaces, as this will cause the slices to turn black.
  - Do not let them get rained on.
4. **Wash Again:** Once needed, soak the slices in water and squeeze them to remove any remaining toxins.
5. **Dry Again:** Air-dry the slices a second time.
6. **Pound:** When fully dry, pound the slices into smaller bits. If there is no *lusong* and *alho* (large wooden mortar and pestle), a food processor or blender can be used as an alternative.
7. **Sift:** Use a *bilao* or strainer to sift and separate the fine kayos flour from the larger particles.



# Peanut

*Arachis hypogaea*

Local name: Mani



Meet mighty Mani! You've probably seen it everywhere: boiled, roasted, salted, or crushed into peanut butter and kare-kare sauce. Beyond our shores, mani turns into oil, flour, and candy, but here, it's the warmth itself, blending into stews and desserts. It may be small, but it packs flavor and fun in every bite. From snacks to sweets, Mani is your nutty kitchen buddy!



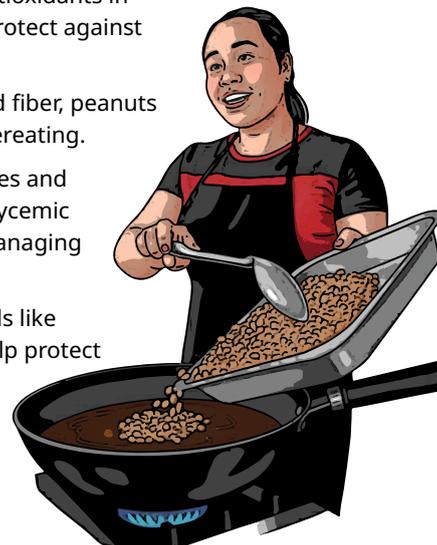
## Why it's good for you

Peanuts are a powerhouse of plant-based nutrition. They're rich in protein, fiber, and healthy fats, which help keep you full and energized. Despite being called "nuts," peanuts are actually legumes<sup>11</sup>, related to beans and lentils. Their nutrients support heart health, weight management, and overall vitality.



## Health highlights<sup>12</sup>

- ✓ **Heart Health:** The good fats, fiber, and antioxidants in peanuts may help lower cholesterol and protect against heart disease.
- ✓ **Weight Management:** High in protein and fiber, peanuts promote fullness and may help reduce overeating.
- ✓ **Blood Sugar Balance:** Low in carbohydrates and high in healthy fats, peanuts have a low glycemic index, making them suitable for people managing blood sugar.
- ✓ **Rich in Antioxidants:** Contains compounds like resveratrol<sup>13</sup> and p-coumaric acid<sup>14</sup> that help protect the body from cell damage.
- ✓ **Gallstone Prevention:** Regular consumption may lower the risk of developing gallstones.



# The Christmas Peanut Butter Story

For **Maylyn Piera (37)**, cooking began as a small experiment that turned into a lasting part of her life. In 2018, she opened a little store in Kabankalan City and noticed how people loved buying peanut butter, especially during Christmas. So, she decided to try making it herself, thinking it would be more practical and more personal if she cooked it on her own. She learned through videos and trial and error. She kept the recipe simple, skipping milk that she saw in tutorials so the peanut butter would last longer through the holiday rush.

Each year since then, when November comes, Maylyn begins her preparations. Her kitchen fills with the earthy scent of roasted peanuts, the sound of stirring, and the excitement that always comes before Christmas festivities. By December, she's busy again, cooking sack after sack of peanuts, packing jars, and sending them out to friends, neighbors, and resellers. According to her, they sell out quickly during Christmas and they're great for giving as gifts. Many of the peanuts she uses come from nearby farms or her neighbors' backyards. In a way, her cooking continues what they started. Their harvests find new life in her jars, transformed into something warm and nostalgic for others to enjoy.

In Kabankalan, it's common for farmers to process their peanuts rather than sell them fresh. Bringing sacks to the market often costs more than what they earn, so turning them into peanut butter or snacks becomes the wiser choice. It takes time and effort, but the value it adds makes a real difference.

Her shelves fill with rows of peanut butter in simple plastic jars with orange lids—the kind Filipinos instinctively reach for. There's a homemade warmth to them that supermarket jars can't quite match. Each one carries not just flavor but also the imprint of the community that makes it possible.

For Maylyn, making peanut butter has grown to be more than just an extra source of income for her. It's a yearly ritual that links her kitchen to the fields, her hands to the harvest, and her effort to the simple joys of the season. Each jar she fills serves as a reminder that the spirit of Christmas—warm, festive, and shared—can be found in even the humblest crops.



# Peanut Butter



## Ingredients:

Raw white peanuts  
(preferred, but red peanuts  
also work)

Sugar

Salt

Butter

Vegetable oil

1. **Sort:** Remove any peanuts that are spoiled or discolored so the peanut butter doesn't turn bitter.



2. **Fry Evenly:** To speed up the cooking process, heat the pan with enough vegetable oil to completely cover the peanuts. Stirring continuously, add the peanuts and cook until golden brown.



3. **Drain:** Scoop out the peanuts using a strainer to reduce excess oil.



4. **Blend:** Mix the peanuts with butter, sugar, and a pinch of salt, then blend until smooth.



5. **Alternative Method:** If no blender is available, take the peanuts mixed with butter and sugar to the local grinder in the market. The price of the service depends on the weight of the peanuts.

# Ube

*Dioscorea alata*

Local names: Ube, Violet yam,  
Kinampay (Visayas)



Here comes *Ube*—the purple superstar! You’ve boiled it, mashed it, and turned it into *halaya*, that sweet jam of purple-y memory. In Visayas, they call it *kinampay*, the same root that colors your *halo-halo*, *puto*, and ice cream. It started in home gardens, but now it travels the world as a proud Filipino flavor. Steam it whole, skin and all, to keep its color bright and its story whole!



## Why it's good for you

Purple yam, or *ube*, is not just a dessert staple; it's a powerhouse of nutrition. Packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and resistant starch, *ube* supports heart health, blood sugar balance, and gut health. Its vibrant color comes from anthocyanins<sup>15</sup>, which help protect the body from inflammation and cellular damage.



## Health highlights<sup>16</sup>

- ✓ **Antioxidant-rich:** Anthocyanins give ube its purple color and help lower inflammation, improve circulation, and protect against chronic diseases.
- ✓ **Supports blood sugar control:** With a low glycemic index and high fiber, ube helps release energy slowly, preventing blood sugar spikes.
- ✓ **Heart-healthy:** Antioxidants and potassium help regulate blood pressure and maintain cardiovascular health.
- ✓ **Boosts immunity:** Its high vitamin C content strengthens the immune system and aids iron absorption.
- ✓ **Good for gut health:** Resistant starch in ube feeds healthy gut bacteria, improving digestion and reducing inflammation.



## Purple for the Twins!



For **Amelia Detera Vilbar (61)**, cooking *ube halaya* has always been a matter of instinct. No one taught her how to make it. She learned by doing, by stirring, by watching the color change under the slow fire. What used to be called “*ubeng biko*” in her younger years has now become the creamy *ube halaya* many in her community have come to cherish. When the purple yams begin to soften in boiling water, Nay Amelia already knows by heart how much milk and coconut cream to pour in. No written measures, no exact count, only the familiar weight of the ladle and the memory of countless afternoons spent over the same pot.

When she shared her recipe with us, she was joined by her fellow farmer, **Mary Grace Manzanares**, who, like her, is an active member of the Mailum Organic Village Association. Together, they stirred patiently until the mixture thickened to just the right texture—not too soft, not too firm—before dividing it into small tubs. They usually sell a few for ₱75 each, though Nay Amelia never really sees it as a business. Most of the time, she cooks it for her seven-year-old twin grandchildren, who adore the pure taste of real *ube*.

She laughs as she tells us how the twins can always tell the difference. When *ube* isn't in season, their mother sometimes

makes a version with sweet potato and powder flavoring, but the twins always know it's not quite the same. What they look for is their grandmother's *halaya*, the kind made only from boiled *ube*, coconut cream, and condensed milk. It's smooth and fragrant, with a faint trace of smoke from the fire and a sweetness that lingers. Nay Amelia takes quiet pride in that, and she beams whenever her grandchildren enjoy her cooking. It makes her happy, she says, especially since *ube halaya* has become their favorite, so much so that they even eat it as *ulam*.

Her only tip: Boil the *ube* until soft. Stir constantly; don't stop, or it burns, and when it burns, the taste changes.

Sometimes, she spreads the *halaya* on bread, stirs it into *halo-halo*, or even turns it into crispy crackers by frying slices of *ube*. Whether it's made or shared, it carries the same patience that has long defined her cooking.

*Mary Grace (left) and Amelia*



# Ube Halaya



## Ingredients:

Purple yam (*ube*)

Condensed milk

Coconut cream  
(*kakang gata*)

Coconut milk

Grated cheese

1. **Prepare the *Ube*:** Wash, peel, and cut the *ube* into pieces, then boil until soft.



2. **Mash:** Mash the boiled *ube* until smooth.



3. **Make the *Gata*:** Grate a mature coconut and mix with water to extract both the thick coconut cream and regular coconut milk.



4. **Cook:** Bring the *gata* to a boil, then add the mashed *ube*. Stir continuously to prevent sticking and burning.



5. **Sweeten:** Once the mixture thickens and turns a deep purple, add condensed milk and adjust the sweetness to taste.
6. **Transfer:** Pour the *halaya* into a container.
7. **Finish:** Top with grated cheese before serving.

# Munggo

*Vigna radiata*

Local names: Munggo, Monggo, Balatong (Ilokano & Itawes)



This is Munggo, your go-to Friday dish! You cook it slowly with garlic, onions, and tomatoes, sometimes with *ampalaya* leaves, *tinapa*, or *chicharon* on top. It's affordable, filling, and made for sharing. Across Asia, it pops up in soups, stews, and even desserts. Tiny, yes, but every spoonful feels like a hug after a long day.



## Why it's good for you

Mung beans are rich in protein, essential amino acids, fiber, and antioxidants. They're known to support heart health, digestion, and blood sugar balance. Traditionally, munggo is valued for being both nourishing and restorative, a comfort food during rainy days and a hearty dish after long work hours.



## Health highlights<sup>17</sup>

- ✓ **Heart health:** Helps lower LDL<sup>18</sup> ("bad") cholesterol and support blood vessel function.
- ✓ **Digestive support:** High in fiber and resistant starch, which feed healthy gut bacteria and improve digestion.
- ✓ **Blood sugar balance:** Slows sugar release into the bloodstream and enhances insulin function.
- ✓ **Cooling and restorative:** In traditional Asian cuisine, munggo is eaten to regulate body temperature and prevent heatstroke.
- ✓ **Pregnancy support:** Rich in folate, which helps reduce the risk of neural tube defects.



# Light of a Home

For **Joventina “Tipay” Ong (63)**, farming and cooking have always been connected—one hand planting, the other stirring. In her home, warmth often begins in the kitchen. It’s where the day settles after work in the fields, where the smell of frying dough mingles with laughter. For her, cooking is not just a task; it’s how she keeps the house alive, how she fills the quiet spaces with comfort.

She learned to cook as a child, standing beside her mother and grandmother, watching how they turned what was available into something delicious. There were no written recipes, only gestures to remember: a handful here, a splash there, a taste adjusted until it felt right. They taught her that food was more than sustenance; it was care made visible. Cooking, for her, is a heritage, something passed down from her mother and grandmother. It’s a legacy she continues not just through recipes, but through the values they carried: mindfulness, care, and the quiet pride of feeding others well.

Now a mother herself, Nay Tipay carries that same light forward. She cooks for her three children with the same care she learned at home, using what she grows—vegetables from the backyard, rice from the fields, and fruits she harvests

herself. She avoids anything too salty, oily, or sweet, always choosing food that feels clean and kind. Over the years, she shaped her version of *buchi* and other pastries according to the taste she prefers.

She believes that success in cooking comes from practice and experience, from learning with your hands and heart. For her, good food is never just about flavor but also about the cleanliness of the kitchen, the care in presentation, and the little touches that show effort and love. Every garnish, every careful movement, adds to one’s talent. And when her children eat what she prepares, they taste not only her hands but also the hands of the women who came before her. Because the light of a home doesn’t fade when a mother leaves. It lingers in the dishes she’s taught, in the flavors remembered, and in the quiet sizzling of someone still cooking, still caring, still keeping the home aglow.

*Special thanks to the following Tabucol Farmers Association (TFA) members who helped prepare these dishes:*

*Butz D. Buerom*

*Romela E. Villarosa*

*Emeliza V. Roquero*

*Celine N. Celestial*

*Marivic D. Bagaslo*

*Rosana S. Servilla*

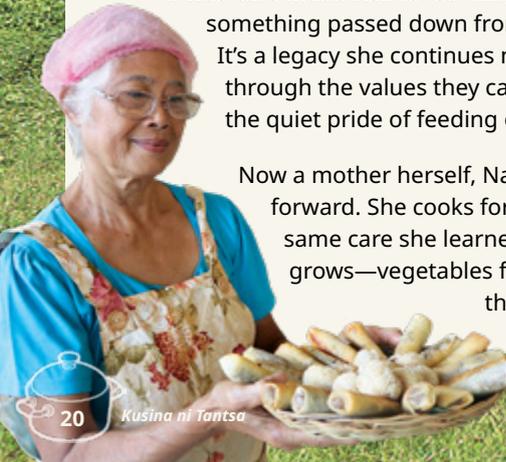
*Romeo P. Celestial*

*Enidema B. Bajar*

*Mark Joseph N. Ong*

*Daylene H. Panganiban*

*Nelia S. Sayco*



# Buchi



## Ingredients:

Boiled munggo

Condensed milk

Margarine

Warm water

Sugar

Glutinous rice flour

Cornstarch

Sesame seeds

Oil

- 1. Prepare the Filling:** Boil the munggo until very soft, and the water evaporates. Cook with condensed milk and margarine until thick and almost dry. Let cool.



- 2. Make Sugar Water:** Dissolve sugar in warm water.
- 3. Form the Dough:** Add sugar water to the glutinous rice flour. Mix until the dough is soft and slightly wet but not overly sticky.



- 4. Shape:** Take a small portion of dough, roll it into a ball, flatten it, and place some munggo filling in the center. Roll again between your palms to form a smooth ball.
- 5. Coat:** Mix a little water and cornstarch. Dip each dough ball lightly, then roll in sesame seeds.
- 6. Fry:** Deep fry the *buchi* until golden and cooked through.



# Sweet Munggo Lumpia



## Ingredients:

Boiled munggo

Margarine

Condensed milk

Cheese (cut into long strips)

Lumpia wrapper

Oil (for frying)

1. **Cook the Filling:** Boil the munggo until tender. Stir in margarine and condensed milk until the munggo mixture thickens. Let it cool.



2. **Assemble:** Place a strip of cheese and some munggo filling on a lumpia wrapper. Roll tightly and seal the edges with water.



3. **Fry:** Deep fry until golden and crisp.



# Cassava

*Manihot esculenta*

Local names: Kamoteng kahoy, balinghoy, yuca, manioc, Brazilian arrowroot, Kasila-kayo (Tagabawa)



Meet Cassava, the traveler from South America who found a happy home in your backyard. You can turn it into cassava cake, sweet and golden with coconut cream; *kabkab*, thin and crisp from the sun; or *nilupak*, mashed with butter and sugar into something nostalgic.

## Why it's good for you

Cassava is the root that fed generations through scarcity and celebration alike. Beneath its tough brown skin lies a nutty, starchy core packed with vitamin C, copper, and resistant starch. It's gluten-free, grain-free, and wonderfully adaptable, making it a staple in Filipino kitchens from cassava cake to *pichi-pichi*.

## Health highlights<sup>19</sup>

- ✓ **Gut Health Guardian:** Its resistant starch nourishes good bacteria and keeps digestion running smoothly.
- ✓ **Immunity Booster:** Rich in vitamin C for collagen production and cell protection.
- ✓ **Steady Energy Source:** Complex carbs for long-lasting energy and fullness.
- ✓ **Supports Metabolic Balance:** Helps regulate appetite and blood sugar when eaten in moderation.

**Note:** Raw cassava contains compounds that release cyanide<sup>20</sup>—a reminder that nature's gifts must be treated with respect. Always peel, soak, and cook cassava thoroughly before eating.



# Shared Bites of Steamed and Deep-Fried Dreams

**Billy Flor (53)**, chairperson of the Mailum Minoyan United Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative (MMUFMPC), has spent her life tending the soil in Purok Tisa, Barangay Mailum, Bago City. A farmer since childhood, she's most at home in the fields, but in her kitchen, she finds another kind of joy. She started cooking *okoy* when she got married, first for her family, then for the neighborhood kids who'd drop by after school. Her version is simple: grated cassava mixed with salt and pepper, fried to a perfect golden crisp. Sometimes she swaps cassava for papaya or squash, depending on what's fresh and ready from the farm.

In the late afternoons, her kitchen comes alive. The smell of frying *okoy* fills the air as her grandchildren come running home, followed by other children from the neighborhood. They crowd around the pan, waiting for their turn to grab a piece while it's still hot and crisp. Nay Billy says that they love their merienda with a smile. Her home has become a gathering place after class—warm, noisy, and full of laughter. When someone places an order, she happily makes extra.

*Genierose (left) and Billy*

Each piece sells for only five pesos, just enough so every child can afford one. With thirty pesos' worth of cassava, she can feed many. She shared that you can just slice it thinly by hand if you don't have a grater, as it cooks fast, and tastes even better when shared.

For **Genierose Laguyo (33)**, cooking began as a mother's simple wish to make something special for her child. She started cooking only eight years ago after getting married and realizing she needed to learn for the family she and her husband were building. Her youngest loved store-bought *pichi-pichi*, that soft, chewy kakanin made from cassava, so one day she decided to make it herself. Why buy it outside, she thought, when she could make it fresh and clean right at home, especially with cassava growing in their own yard?

She learned the recipe from online tutorials, keeping the process simple and familiar. To make it her own, she adds water from boiled ube or pandan for natural color and fragrance. She likes it when it's chewy because it melts in your mouth. Sometimes, she sells her *pichi-pichi* too—₱150 in ingredients makes about 50 pieces, enough to earn a little extra for her family. But for Genierose, it's more than just a business. It's her way of turning love into something tangible, something her child can taste and remember. Her youngest loves kakanin, so as long as there's cassava, she'll keep making *pichi-pichi*.

# Okoy



## Ingredients:

Cassava

Salt

Pepper

Chopped spring onions

Turmeric powder  
(kalawag powder)

1. **Prepare the Cassava:** Peel, wash, and grate the cassava.
2. **Squeeze:** Rinse with water, then squeeze out excess liquid.
3. **Mix:** Combine the cassava with salt, pepper, chopped spring onions, and kalawag powder. Adjust the amount of kalawag powder and other ingredients according to taste.



4. **Shape:** Form the mixture into round patties, then flatten.



5. **Deep Fry:** Fry until crisp and golden.
6. **Serve:** Enjoy as a snack or as ulam.

# Pichi-Pichi



## Ingredients:

Cassava

Water

Lye water

Vanilla extract

Sugar

Grated coconut

1. **Prepare the Cassava:** Peel and grate the cassava and soak it in water.
2. **Squeeze:** Strain and squeeze to remove excess liquid.
3. **Mix:** Add the cassava to fresh water, then mix in lye water, vanilla extract for aroma, and sugar.



4. **Mold:** Pour the mixture into molds.
5. **Steam:** Steam until cooked. Check doneness by inserting a toothpick; it should come out clean.
6. **Cool and Coat:** Let the pichi-pichi cool, then roll in grated coconut.
7. **Serve:** Ready to enjoy.



**Note:** Cassava grows quietly and steadily year-round. In the hands of women like Nay Billy and Genierose, it becomes a symbol of care, of love passed from kitchen to child. Steamed or deep-fried, sweet or savory, in every shared bite of *okoy* or *pichi-pichi*, there's a taste of what they hope to give their children: something warm, something lasting, something made with dreams, served fresh from the pan.



# Sweet Potato

*Ipomoea batatas*

Local names: Kamote, Kasila



This is *Kamote*, simple, sweet, and always ready to cheer you up! You can boil it, roast it, fry it into *kamote cue*, or even blend it into smoothies. In every home, it reminds us of resilience and how simple things can sustain and comfort. Peel or no peel, it's always there when you need a little pick-me-up!



## Why it's good for you

*Kamote* is rich in beta-carotene (vitamin A), vitamin C, fiber, and antioxidants, making it one of the healthiest staples in the Filipino diet. They also have anticancer properties and may promote immune function. Its natural sweetness and soft texture make it a comforting food that nourishes both body and memory.



## Health highlights<sup>21</sup>

- ✓ **Supports vision and immunity:** Its bright orange color signals beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A, an essential for healthy eyes and immune function.
- ✓ **Good for digestion:** Both soluble and insoluble fiber help maintain gut health and regular digestion.
- ✓ **Antioxidant-rich:** Anthocyanins and carotenoids<sup>22</sup> protect the body from oxidative stress and inflammation.
- ✓ **Energy booster:** Provides steady energy from its complex carbohydrates and slow-releasing starch.
- ✓ **Heart-healthy:** Potassium and antioxidants help regulate blood pressure and improve circulation.



# A Daughter's Love Served at the Table

For **Ma. Kesia Valgona (22)**, a third-year Office Administration student at Bago City College, cooking began as a simple act of curiosity—watching her older brother move around the kitchen, stirring, tasting, and teaching her how flavors come together. Those early moments of just chopping ingredients grew into confidence until she could trust her own hands and make dishes shaped by her own touch. At home in Purok Humayan, her parents grow sweet potato, cassava, fruits, and vegetables. From them, Kesia learned that food begins long before it reaches the kitchen. It begins in the soil, in the silent effort of growing and harvesting. And in her hands, those crops find new life.

During the pandemic, as she studied online, her interest in cooking deepened into purpose. She began selling banana balls stuffed with cheese or chocolate and other snacks—not only to fill her time, but also to help with household expenses. Each batch she prepared is proof that even in uncertain times, something made with love could sustain more than just hunger.

Her signature recipe, *Munggo-Sweet Potato Delight*, was born from that same sense of curiosity. One afternoon, while boiling sweet potatoes and adding powdered milk as her mother instructed, she noticed how their soft texture reminded her of mashed

munggo. She thought that they're almost the same so she mixed them. She refined it further, adding evaporated and condensed milk for creaminess, until it became her own version of a local favorite. Common in her community, yes, but hers carries a little twist—munggo for added texture and nourishment.

At church gatherings with the Kingdom Builders Faith Ministry Glocal, every family brings a dish, and for theirs, Kesia always takes charge. Her signature recipe has become a crowd favorite, often requested by Pastor Jerry Dionson, who encouraged her to share her recipe. When asked about her secret to good cooking, Kesia simply says her tip is to always cook with love because a dish made with heart always finds its way to others.

*Special thanks to Cyra Balgona (right), Kesia's (left) cousin for helping her prepare these dishes.*



# Munggo-Sweet Potato Delight



## Ingredients:

Boiled sweet potatoes

Cooked munggo

Evaporated milk  
(amount depends on  
preferred creaminess)

Sugar

1. **Cook the Sweet Potato:** Boil the sweet potatoes until tender.



2. **Cook the Munggo:** Simmer the munggo over low heat until fully cooked.



3. **Blend:** Process the munggo in a food processor until smooth.
4. **Add Milk and Sugar:** Mix in evaporated milk and sugar according to your preferred taste and creaminess.
5. **Mash the Sweet Potato:** Mash the boiled sweet potatoes until smooth.

6. **Combine:** Mix the sweet potato and munggo mixtures thoroughly. Then grate cheese and spread it on top.



7. **Chill:** Refrigerate before serving. This makes a sweet, filling dessert—perfect for hot weather.

# Munggo-Sweet Potato Lumpia



## Ingredients:

Boiled munggo

Sugar (to taste)

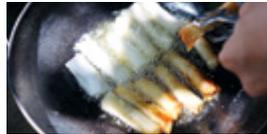
Sweet potato  
(cut into small pieces)

Lumpia wrapper

Condensed milk (optional)

Cheese (optional)

1. **Cook the Munggo:** Boil the munggo until soft.
2. **Sweeten:** Add sugar based on your preferred level of sweetness.
3. **Blend:** Process the cooked munggo in a food processor or blender until smooth. If a blender and a food processor are not available, use a mortar and pestle to grind the munggo.
4. **Cook the Sweet Potato:** Fry or boil the sweet potato pieces. You may cook extra since any leftovers can be turned into fries.
5. **Add Sweet Potato:** Place a piece of cooked sweet potato inside the munggo mixture.
6. **Wrap:** Roll the munggo and sweet potato in a lumpia wrapper.
7. **Fry:** Deep fry until golden and crisp.



8. **Finish:** Add condensed milk and cheese on top if desired. It can also be served plain since the filling is already flavorful.



**Note:** You can also make fries using sweet potato, cassava, ube. Just peel, wash, slice into thin strips, and fry until crisp. These fries are already flavorful on their own, but they become even tastier when sprinkled with cheese powder.



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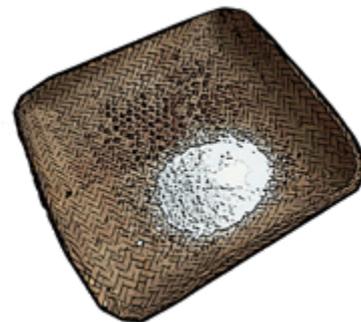
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The **Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE)** is a regional non-government organization that promotes sustainable and resilient food systems through ecological agriculture with emphasis on the conservation and development of agricultural biodiversity and advocates for policies that support, strengthen, and institutionalize community initiatives on sustainable and resilient food systems. It works in partnership with farming communities, local and national government units, civil society organizations, and academic and research institutions in Southeast Asia.

Address:

14-D Maalalahanin Street, Teachers Village West  
Diliman, Quezon City 1101 Philippines  
Phones: (+63-2) 8922-6710; (+63-2) 7373-0530

Website: [www.searice.org.ph](http://www.searice.org.ph)

Email: [searice@searice.org.ph](mailto:searice@searice.org.ph)

Facebook: <https://facebook.com.searice2>



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



International Treaty  
on Plant Genetic Resources  
for Food and Agriculture

The **Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)** is an essential element of the Funding Strategy and of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing. It aims to enable small-scale farmers to access a wide range of plant genetic resources that are adapted to their needs. Their long-term hope is that farmers will cultivate a broader range of crop varieties, especially those that are tastier and more nutritious.

BSF supports projects like “Engendering access for smallholder farmers to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture for conservation and sustainable use” and ensures that benefits, such as knowledge, technology, and income, are shared fairly with farming communities. Through research, seed conservation, and training, the BSF strengthens food security, promotes biodiversity, and empowers local farmers.

Website: [www.fao.org/plant-treaty/areas-of-work/benefit-sharing-fund/](http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/areas-of-work/benefit-sharing-fund/)



*Kusina ni Tantsa* is not just a recipe book but a story of remembering.

Each story begins with a crop, moves through a cook's hands, and ends in a shared meal.

The recipes here are not precise measurements but traces of how food, memory, and place continue to shape the Filipino table: part recipe, part reflection, all heart.

And like any good meal, don't forget to **add salt love to taste.**

WEBSITE

 [searice.org.ph](http://searice.org.ph)

FACEBOOK

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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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International Treaty  
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