

Daniel and Ellenita Lubuguin

Where: Philippines Best Food

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Daniel and Ellen Lubuguin

Philippines Best Food

1757 7th St.

Parkersburg, WV 26101

Daniel and Ellen Lubuguin are the owners of Philippines Best Food in Parkersburg, WV. Daniel works as the chef and Ellen also owns and operates a salon next door. The Lubuguins are originally from the Philippines and have been living in West Virginia for over 20 years.

DL: Daniel Lubuguin

EL: Ellen Lubuguin

EH: Emily Hilliard

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00:00

EH: Alright. So I'll just hold this. But could you introduce yourselves and tell me when and where you were born?

I can just hold it (in reference to microphone)

EL: I'm Ellenita Lubuguin, I'm born in the Philippines but I've been here more than 30 years.

EH: And did you come to West Virginia right away?

EL: Yes. Yes, I did come to West Virginia.

EH: And what about you?

DL: I'm Daniel Lubuguin. I was born and raised in the Philippines and I've been here about 23 years in West Virginia. First time I come here, I started in Marietta, Ohio.

EH: Could you tell me a little bit about your family in the Philippines? Like your childhood and heritage?

EL: You go first.

EH: You want to start?

DL: Well, it's hard to remember everything because it's been a long time.

EL: When you say heritage...

DL: Well, where you come from...

EH: Your family...

DL: Your family.

EH: What your parents did.

DL: You know, growing up I mean, we grew... I grew up being poor. Growing up in poverty I mean, was... I... my... I was an illegitimate child, my grandmother raised me cause my mother cannot raise me because she don't have anything. So I was growing up with nothing. We start... I remember when I was only 6 years old or 7 years old growing up, we don't have any electric. We use firewood to cook inside the house and my grandparents, they... she had about like 12 sons and daughters, so it was about 12.

Actually it used to be 14 in the family and 2 died when they were growing up. And they treated me as their own kid because they were raising me. And you know, growing up being poor, it's very hard. It's a lot of time, we don't have anything to eat, we go... I go to school, barefoot, nothing, walk for about a mile to go to school, then come back home, still have nothing to eat. So, pretty much all my uncles and aunties, I call them brother and sister because I grew up with them at the same time.

EH: What about you?

EL: Like...

EH: Well, what did your parents do, or what was your childhood like?

EL: Okay, my childhood, what my parents do, um...were always been in the business, well, actually, we're like a vendor in the market. You know, we sell onions, we sell tomatoes, in a cart, you know, we push the cart. That's when, that's when I decided to um... to I went to school as a hairdresser in the Philippines.

EH: Okay.

EL: And it's because how you say... how you, I mean, we had a hard life too. We went through you know, the reason why... when we're pushing cart, tomatoes, and we go to, we go to a different market to sell the rest of it and then, you know, they'll say illegal vendors and then the cops will go chase you... they will chase you. But um, so I... I sell vegetables in the market early morning and then I go to school in the afternoon, you know. And um, and then... you know, his... my first husband is an American. And he's in the mili(tary)... that's how I met him. I was working in the barber shop when I met him.

EH: Okay.

EL: But he's deceased. He just died last year. You know. But that's how I end up here. Because he brought me here in 1985... we, you know, we get married in the Philippines in 1985 and he brought me here and that's how I end up in West Virginia.

EH: Okay. What area of the Philippines are you from?

EL: Actually, we're... I'm in... we live... actually we work on the same place, you know, but we don't know each other. But we work... he work inside the base as, you know a cook. Right?

DL: What?

EL: Didn't you used to work in a restaurant?

DL: Yes.

EL: As an assistant cook. And then I worked in the, inside the base doing nails to those dependents. You know, like the military wives. Yes. You know.

EH: But you didn't know each other then?

EL: No.

EH: Wow.

EL: We didn't know each other. We met through Marietta Bible Center Church.

EH: Okay.

EL: Yes, because his dad is a missionary and I go to church in Marietta.

EH: Small world.

EL: Yes, that's how we met.

DL: Yep.

EL: Yes.

EH: And how did you learn to cook?

DL: Well, I actually started, you know, like what I said, being poor, you've got to do everything to survive. I did everything I could. Then I... after I graduated high school, I apply for a job in one restaurant in Philippines, and that's back then when there used to be a U.S. Naval base in there.

EL: U.S. base.

6:48

DL: And they were looking for somebody for a dishwasher, so I said, "I don't care. As long as it's a job." And I start working as a dishwasher, I mean we're busy all the time. And then the cook needs somebody to help with everything so I start helping him out, cutting vegetables and other stuff. And then he quit, he went to get a job in Saudi Arabia or something like that, and so they put me as a cook. I was like, "well, I don't know anything, but I'll learn from there." That's how I mean, if you're willing, you will learn. You know? That's how I learn how to cook.

EH: So were you making American dishes or Filipino dishes?

DL: Both. America, because there's a... when, when Americans come to the restaurant, they were with their wives, or you know, with other people, Filipino, so we served both of them. Like American food and Filipino food at the same time.

EH: Is there a specific style or Filipino food where you're from?

DL: Not really! Because you know, in Philippines, as long as it's prepared right, cause we don't do... we don't, we don't cook by measuring and everything—it's by taste.

EL: Taste.

DL: That's how we...

EL: No culinary art... no culinary cooking.

EH: (laughs)

EL: We don't have culinary cooking

DL: Yep.

EH: I think that's—when you're able to do it without measuring though, that's when you're an expert!

EL: Yeah, by taste.

DL: Yes by taste.

EL: You just taste it.

DL: And, and by taste...

EL: It's like home cooking.

DL: And making mistakes all the time. You know, there's a lot of, the server will come back and say "hey, this is still raw, this burnt." You know, and that's how you learn. I don't, I don't take that as a, you know... I don't get mad about—I say, "I'll fix it, I'll take care of it." And that's what I do. And that's how you learn! I try to experiment with everything, you know, whenever that will work. That's the same thing when I... when we started here, you know, we—it's more like, we try first and see how it's gonna work to American people.

EH: Right.

EL: Not we try, it's you know, he started as a... we decided to start... because this was just a carry-out then.

EH: Okay.

EL: So this is only been—it's not even a year.

EH: Oh really? Okay.

EL: Yes, the restaurant is not even a year, but it's been 4 years, just a take-out. So we started just—that used to be a storage building, and then him and our neighbor helped him, helped our neighbor to fix that as a take-out restaurant. And that's how we started a little bit at a time. It's 4 years and then this opened up—this was empty—this was an empty lot.

EH: Oh wow, okay.

EL: And that's why we end up buying it through the help of a local bank. You know, so...

DL: Alright, here we go! (waitress brings over plate of food)

EL: That's adobo.

10:22

That's the adobo with rice.

DL: Rice pancit.

EL: Pancit.

DL: (Daniel says something to Ellen)

EL: Okay—pancit is traditional Filipino because it's rice noodles and then... in all our events, you know, Filipinos, they always have pancit because they say that's long life.

EH: Okay.

EL: You know, so that's the traditional dish for...

DL: Especially for birthdays.

EL: Special days. The rice noodles, which is rice—rice is noodles is gluten-free. But the only thing...

EH: So the noodles are what symbolize long life? The long noodles?

DL: Yes.

EL: Yes. The long noodles. Because it's long.

DL: Actually Chinese because—they're the ones who brought that to the Philippines. That's how their...

EL: The noodles. The noodles.

DL: Yes.

EL: But the rice noodles is made by Filipinos.

DL: It's also made by Chinese.

EL: Yeah?

DL: It started in China. Because they're... they... the Chinese like to eat noodles because they feel it's also long life. When you eat noodles. That's their, you know. And like I was telling you earlier, this is the pork adobo. This is very popular dish in the Philippines because it was introduced by Spanish during 15, 16, or 17th century.

EL: Yeah, adobo.

DL: Or you know, Spanish have been there for 400 years, so this is basically what Spanish—how they preserve the meat. They use... of course they only used salt and vinegar back then. And they... then Chinese came, they introduced soy sauce. That's how Filipinos started mixing it up with soy sauce. And that's how they get all this blend and everything. So it's all the mixture, pretty much, of Spanish and Chinese.

EH: Okay.

EL: And to add with that, the reason you know, it's adobo, when people is really picky—you know, West Virginia—they just want meat and potatoes.

EH: Right.

EL: And that's the best to try is meat and potatoes. The potatoes is actually from my late father because he wanted to put adobo with... Filipinos don't say... like potatoes in adobo, but he wants to introduce the potatoes... he's the one that added the potatoes to the adobo.

EH: Okay.

EL: But normally, adobo don't have potatoes.

EH: I see.

EL: It's just onions and garlic, you know. Meat.

EH: So it's more of an adaptation for Americans' or West Virginians' tastes.

EL: Yes. Yes. Yes, West Virginians taste. Meat and potatoes.

DL: And this is what we call Lumpia Shanghai. Which we use terms "egg roll" here in West Virginia because...

EH: Right.

DL: It's easy for people to recognize because there's egg roll in... ah... wrapper... wrapper.

EL: They call it egg roll.

DL: So that's why, but basically it's lumpia.

EL: And the Philippines is famous for lumpia.

DL: Yes, which basically it's also more for gatherings like birthdays...

EL: finger, finger food.

DL: And all other kind of things that they can celebrate. They have to have the pancit and the lumpia.

EH: Okay.

EL: For as a meal, as a dish.

DL: Which was also brought in by the Chinese.

EH: Okay.

DL: I mean the traditional name was also borrowed by Chinese so... everything basically is more Hispanic and Chinese culture type. I mean when...

EL: But then the Philippines formulated it, you know, it's different...

DL: Different way.

EL: Different way... different, so the Chinese—it's not the same. It looks like the Chinese, but it's not the same as Chinese.

EH: Right.

EL: You tasted that, didn't you?

EH: Yeah, I had the pancit and the lumpia I think.

EL: Yes, and it's not the same as, you know...

EH: Right. Right.

EL: And then our egg roll, and also our cabbage is... we cut 'em all here. It's all fresh. It's fresh vegetables and we wrap it in the egg roll wrapper so we just have basically it's not like those you by with cut up vegetables—no. It's fresh vegetables and we cut them and then we roll 'em.

EH: You can tell.

EL: Yeah, and even the pork or beef egg rolls—it's the same way.

EH: Okay. And are there certain ingredients that are in a lot of Filipino cuisine? Things that grow there...

DL: Not really. Basically we are more into vinegar and soy sauce, basically.

EH: Okay.

DL: Basically. You know, it's easy to fix. It's easy to give flavor. Especially soy sauce. You know? There's a lot of...

EL: Or some, we use some mixes from the Philippines, you know.

DL: Yes, to give it some flavor or...

EL: We order it.

EH: Right.

EL: We order those.

DL: But we have to watch whatever we have to use because we don't want to use a lot of MSG and things like that, so it's all basically...

EL: We don't use. No. No.

DL: Basically it's all natural—soy sauce, and salt.

EL: No preservative.

DL: No.

EL: No preservative.

EH: Right.

DL: We try not to use the preservative. Because even the sauce—I make my own sauce and...

EL: He make his own sauce, every week.

DL: The soy sauce and sweet and sour sauce. Yeah. We basically make everything our own.

EH: Wow.

EL: But our—his trademark is the teriyaki and sweet and sour.

EH: Okay.

16:26

EL: Because you know...

DL: That's how I get everything started.

EH: Ah, yeah.

EL: Even our...

EH: It's like the base.

EL: Because we started on the concession trailer first.

DL: Actually we...

EL: Then we opened this one.

EH: Right.

EL: Yeah. We had the concession trailer and then we opened this one.

EH: So you have to make things that people will like right away and then they can expand into other flavors.

EL: Yes, yes, yes. And um... and also the burrito, you know. Have you tried our burrito?

EH: No, I haven't.

DL: That's what I said—you gotta try everything to... like in culinary you have to be creative, you have to try something different. So our son said, you should try the burrito. So it's his idea, so I started it. We never thought it was gonna work. I mean...

EL: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

DL: It's basically like what you get here (motions over plate). Like the pork adobo and the noodles and the rice, roll it up in a tortilla wrapper.

EL: Tortilla wrapper and it makes it a burrito.

EH: That sounds good!

EL: Yeah.

DL: I mean it's...

EL: So that's what we do at the... the... Taste of Parkersburg.

EH: Okay.

EL: Yes, because it's something easy. So it just, you know. They have the burrito, and you know...

EH: Eat it on the go?

EL: Eat it on the go.

EH: And you said sometimes there's in other styles of adobo there's pineapple and sometimes there's...

DL: Bananas.

EH: Yes.

EL: Bananas.

DL: You can fix it... the only good thing about adobo—you can make anything you want on it. We do that with the burrito.

EL: You can make it spicy.

DL: A lot of people like that... you know, you can put that in anything, you can use it for pizza. You can do anything on the adobo. You can make a sandwich out of it. Anything that you want to do, as long as you fix it right.

EH: Right.

DL: Cause normally our adobo—the meat are so tender, cause we cook that for a long time, and it's like...

EL: Sautee...

DL: I mean, it's... the meat are so tender. When you try it, you can tell.

EH: Nice.

DL: There's a big difference.

18:44

EH: And in Filipino cuisine is there a lot of fish? Do you eat a lot of fish?

DL: Basically, yeah, a lot of Filipino like fish. We like fish. Because we like to—see that's one of the reasons why, a lot of Filipino, they live longer because we eat... we balance our food. We eat seafood, we eat meat, we eat vegetables. It's not like you know, like here in West Virginia, they're afraid to try the fish, because you know, they... especially when they see the head of the fish—the eyeballs.

EH: (laughs)

EL: (laughs) that's the thing.

DL: They think that the fish is looking at them! I said, well we said, who's gonna win—the fish or you?

EH: Right. (laughs)

19:31

DL: I mean, it has to be balanced in everything. I mean, because if you just eat meat all the time, I mean, it's not really good for you.

EH: Right.

DL: So you got to have all this balanced way of eating.

EL: And we don't make... there's some traditional Filipino food that we don't want to introduce because it's not...

DL: Presentable

EL: It don't look... it don't... for Filipinos—they love it. But for some Americans, just the smell of it is just, they won't like it, you know. So that's why, we're trying to... we don't want to...you know, for their first time to try the Filipino food and then they already...

EH: Right. Yeah.

EL: Yes. It's about presentation and the smell. But we make... but we still, because if some Filipino comes in and they ask for it, then we make it.

EH: Mm... so there's sort of ... you know some places have like a “secret menu” ...

EL: Yes, “adventures menu”

EH: Oh yeah! (laughs)

EL: This is “adventures menu!” Yes, that's why we're you know, so that way if they want to try it...

EH: Okay.

EL: So that's why we're doing my menu so I'm gonna put them as adventures menu.

EH: Okay, yeah. Cool.

EL: Because we don't want to scare them.

EH: Right.

DL: We try to watch what we...

EL: Because if they see a head, they're like (motions) ahhh!

EH: And then there's some people who...

EL: And then they say is that squid on the seafood paella? Then they see the squid the octopus, and are like ew! You know. It's just like... ugh. Then they don't want to come in.

EH: Right.

EL: But right now we're trying to um... see like one a day. We're trying to organize, like one day is just seafood. Like you have like a basket of seafood—you just put paper in there and you know, just you know, all different kind of seafood, you know the crabs, you know... there. So we're trying to see, you know, we're trying to make it more organized like that.

DL: Make it different.

EL: Yes. And I think by, you know... I think it will be best if we have it outside because at least, you know, you don't want the smell of the seafood to smell inside here. Like, to do an outdoor seating.

EH: Right, yeah.

EL: You know, and then in some seafood!

DL: You know back in the Philippines when I...

EL: Just one day—seafood day! You know?

DL: Back in Philippines when I was young, I mean I like to go out, you know, cause we also live right close to the ocean and I mean, I did a lot of fish vendors early in the morning. That's the best place to go get fish, you know? That's the only... cause we get the fish here, it's already frozen, you know.

EH: Yeah.

DL: It's all... even though it's from Philippines, but it's frozen. Always really good to have a fish or seafood when it's right there. After they got it from the ocean. I mean you can still see the fish still moving and... (laughs)

EH: Right.

DL: I mean it's...

EL: I don't know if it's...

DL: There's a big difference about the taste.

EL: I don't know if it's going to be... if they will, you know...most Filipinos, we eat with our hands. You know what I'm saying?

EH: Yeah.

EL: I wonder if you know, just be like—we eat like in a banana leaves plate and then you know, I don't know if its gonna work because of the Health Department. You know what I'm saying? (laughs)

EH: Well, I think if you advertise it, I think it could really be a draw for some people—you know, certain people. Like I think my friends would be like “let's drive to Parkersburg and have a special meal.” You know?

EL: Yeah.

EH: I think it might be...

EL: Like you would just eat on the banana leaves and then you know...

EH: Yeah. Yeah. And that's really, there isn't necessarily that...

EL: And then you have to eat with your fingers.

EH: Yeah. But people in some parts of the U.S. are used to doing that with crab boils in Maryland...

EL: Yes!

EH: ...but it's not really part of a culture here.

EL: No. No, no. But our culture is, you eat on the banana leaves and then the food is there and everybody eats.

DL: Everybody dig in! (laughs)

EL: Dig in! You know, no utensils. You know, I think that'll be something that we can, that we can do!

DL: The only problem is, it's a different culture here. It's very hard to introduce.

EL: Why not?!

DL: Very, very hard.

EH: But if you could do like a special meal and charge a flat rate...

EL: Yes! Charge a flat rate with that thing you know for them to try.

24:53

EH: Yeah. I think that could work.

EL: Yes! And then just say you know, “hey—you’ll be eating in the banana leaves” and then you know, no fork or no utensils. You just have to eat with your fingers.

EH: And you could tell, you know, as long as you’re telling people a story and how it’s supposed to be done, I think...

EL: Mmhm. Something you know, it has to be different. You have to introduce something different. I mean, I think that just like makes people excited to try. Eating with the banana leaves, you know.

EH: Yeah. Is there... is there a large Filipino community here or in Marietta?

DL: There’s quite a few but...

EL: There’s a few.

DL: Yeah.

EL: But our customers are Americans.

EH: Okay.

EL: Because I think because for them, they can cook it. They can cook the food.

DL: It’s not that we’re bringing down Filipino, but in business, you know, you have to get your target. I mean, you go to a Chinese restaurant, do you see a lot of Chinese people eating at a Chinese restaurant?

EH: But if you do, then you know it’s good!

DL: That’s right!

EH: Well, you know it’s authentic.

DL: Well, it’s not that.

EH: Yeah.

EL: Oh, they eat here, you know those people that’s traveling. But not the ones that live here.

EH: Right. Well, I saw a lot of reviews of people who said they were Filipino and they always stop in when they travel through.

EL: Yes, yes, yes. When they travel through. And they, you know, and then they were, you know, the like, they love it in the reviews. If you say well, them coming in, I just... they just don’t want to spend that much money, on the...you know.

EH: Right, right.

EL: Because I said, if I can cook it, why should I spend the money.

EH: Yeah.

DL: [unintelligible]

EL: But our target is Americans anyway, so it doesn't really... we're not living by...from just the Filipinos. No. That is just... more for... that's why I don't, we don't introduce those foods that Filipinos like, I mean on the menu because I don't want to gross...

DL: Like the fish head (laughs)

EH: Right, right.

EL: I don't want to gross them out.

EH: Yeah.

EL: You know what I mean? So you just have to... our target, our market you know, is you guys, not them.

EH: Mmhm.

27:34

EH: Well, it's interesting, because before I lived here I was living in D.C. and right as I was leaving D.C., Filipino food was becoming trendy you know among white or American D.C. young people—it was having this moment.

EL: Because there's a lot. There's a lot of Filipinos in D.C.

EH: And chefs too.

EL: Maryland, you know those...

EH: Right.

EL: Like there's a lot of Filipinos in California, see. Um, it was Parkersburg, I mean West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky—here are not much Filipinos. So and even though they open up like in Charleston, there's a Hawaiian restaurant that opened there. But you know it only lasted 5 months! It only lasted 5 months!

DL: See that's the thing.

EL: That's why we're so, you know, proud that we've been here almost 5 years.

EH: Right.

EL: Because, you know, starting out, introducing Filipino food...

DL: It's hard.

EL: That's hard for people to try!

EH: Yeah.

DL: It's hard. It takes a lot of marketing but we—word of mouth—that's the main marketing.

EL: That's how we get marketed. Is through word of mouth.

EH: I mean, that's how I heard about it too

EL: See!

DL: And social media. And social media.

EH: Yeah.

EL: And social media. Facebook. And Yelp. And...TripAdvisor, you know, that's how we get them.

EH: Yeah.

EL: But everything else, don't advertise. It's just word of mouth. I'm just depending on people telling people and then us following us on Facebook.

EH: And have you developed a following? Are there loyal customers who come back?

EL: Yeah! I mean, they come back.

DL: We have a lot of repeated customers, I mean they come back. And they bring more people!

EL: Our Facebook has like almost, almost 4,000 followers.

EH: Wow!

EL: Yes. So...

DL: They come back, they bring more people in. Then the people they brought in, they bring more people here.

EL: That's why we introduced the buffet on Friday and Saturday so that way people who've never been here can taste every dish that we have. And from then, they see what they like.

EH: Right. Have you gotten negative, not reviews, but like responses to Filipino food or anything like that?

EL: Well, the only negative one we have is like 3 stars. You know, yes.

DL: There's sometimes that people having a bad day, they come in, you know, they give us a bad review on trip advisor, things like that, that the food is disgusting, that even their dogs can't even eat it, things like that. They got bad days, but then they come back and try again and they, they... they change.

EL: They review us again and then... they change, they changed it.

EH: But that seems particularly directed at a food that they don't understand or know.

DL: Right. Exactly.

EH: You know, I don't think it's about the actual food.

EL: No, actually it's the service. That how, that's how we get... you know, the service. That's the only time they...

EH: (laughs) Or they come in with an idea in their head and then they just want to confirm that idea.

EL: Yeah.

DL: They try sometimes. They try sometimes.

EL: You know, I'll be honest with you. We haven't had a bad review. You know, you know it's a...

EH: I mean I can't see why/how they would.

EL: Yeah, no...

DL: Well, the only thing they complain sometimes is "we've been traveling and we can't find your place."

EH: (laughs)

EL: Yes, because it's so...

EH: It puts you...

EL: It puts you on that side.

DL: 'Cause it was... used to be that...

31:47

EL: 'Cause it used to be that side. So no, I don't know how we can change it. My son changed it to...

DL: Google.

EL: Google, but still...

EH: Yeah.

EL: Because 1757, so it's still...

EH: That's what it did for me when I first came.

DL: It will take a year because this address has been what it used to be the previous address. 'Cause when you do something in GPS it's like that, it will take a year.

EL: I wonder if we could just put the...

EH: You could put a sign or something.

EL: Yeah. Put the old address. In here. It used to be. It's 1743?

DL: No. It will change. Just wait. It will change.

EL: See, it's the same thing, it will put you on that side, didn't it?

EH: Yeah.

DL: It's the same thing with all these new roads. You know, when you do a GPS it will take you to the old roads. It will take a year.

EH: (looking through notebook) Sorry, just want to make sure we've covered everything. Um, so do you feel like you're part of a community here in Parkersburg?

EL: Yeah, yeah. You know, they're supporting us. They're supporting Filipino food actually, you know. And some people will say... once you taste the Filipino food, then...

DL: And we've tried to be part of the community.

EL: They just don't want the Chinese food. No...(laughs) I don't know.

DL: You know, it's like, we've been trying to be part of the community. Like for example, during Veteran's Day, we tried to give the Veterans some like 10% discount or free meal or things like that.

EL: Yeah, they're supporting us. You know. The community's supporting us, you know, for being a small business.

DL: You know, there's so much change in restaurants and they're tired of it. But still, we still have a lot of people that stick with what they know, I mean it's hard to change them.

EH: Right.

DL: We don't know how we gonna change them sometimes, but I mean, sometimes it's... it's I don't know how we can be able to get them to try our food sometimes.

EL: You have to try our ice cream too.

EH: Oh yeah, I saw that.

EL: Uh-huh. Our ice cream, you know, those are...they were shipped all the way from California, you know.

EH: SO what are the flavors?

EL: We have mango, coconut, and the purple ice cream.

EH: So what's the purple?

EL: The purple is...actually it's taro, if you've ever heard of taro root, like a potato, like a sweet yam. That's how...

EH: So is it related to a sweet potato or is it related to like an actual potato?

DL: It's actually a purple yam. It's a yam.

EH: Okay.

EL: It's a yam. It's a potato right?

DL: It's a purple yam.

EL: It's a potato!

DL: Yeah.

EL: Yam is a potato.

DL: It's... yeah.

EL: So it's sweet potato if it's a yam, right?

DL: It's...

EH: Well yam is actually different from a sweet potato, right?

DL: Yeah, they're different.

EH: But in the U.S. they call them the same thing.

DL: Mmhm. Yeah.

EL: Mmhm.

DL: But it's like... the yam itself, it's purple colored.

EH: Okay.

DL: They don't put...

EL: But they don't taste like a potato. The ice cream don't taste like potato.

EH: I think I had some frozen yogurt with taro.

EL: Yeah?

EH: Yeah. Or Vietnamese restaurants have the taro shakes sometimes.

EL: Mmhm.

EH: I've had that before.

35:31

EH: It's really—I really like that.

DL: It's a big difference. A lot of people were surprised when they try it. It's a guessing game. You have to guess.

EL: What's your favorite restaurant? What's your favorite food?

EH: Oh, I don't know—I like all kinds of food.

EL: Yeah.

EH: But in Charleston there's a really great Filipino, or Vietnamese sandwich shop and they have banh mis, I think they bake their own bread, it's really fresh...they have marinated pork...

EL: Really?

EH: It's actually in South Charleston.

EL: In South Charleston?

EH: Yeah.

EL: How long have they been in business?

EH: I don't know! At least 2 years. Yen's Sandwich Shop. It's really good.

EL: Yen's Sandwich Shop? They make their own bread and stuff?

EH: Yep, and you know, all the shakes, like avocado, taro, coconut... coconut milk... all the different types of... what else... there's like basil drinks, coconut...

EL: See? That's what I want to... you know, have like a... like in the summer to have that... a trailer of just all the ice cream and the shake... you know, of the... the Filipino ice cream.

EH: That'd be good.

DL: You're gonna be serving ice cream at the concession...

EL: I know! In concession we serve ice cream, but still, you have to have a you know, just a trailer of just pictures of the ice cream, because you know, it has to separate the ice cream and the other concession.

EH: So what are the other items on the menu that we haven't talked about. Are there others?

EL: There's a lot!

DL: There's actually quite a few on the menu that, you know, but... that's one reason why people think, when they see our menu, they think it's Chinese. Because I have teriyaki chicken, sweet and sour chicken, but because you know, it's the name teriyaki, but when... when they try it, they'll come back for more because it's different. I cook it a different way than Chinese.

EH: Okay.

DL: And we have the curry, chicken curry...

EL: Yes, the curry, which the people...

DL: There's a lot of people very very...

EL: ... the curry because it's like, how do you say...it's spicy—it's a chicken breast curry, you know, like people likes curry,

EH: Right.

EL: And that's...

DL: It's actually healthy food because it's chicken breast and cooked in coconut milk.

EL: It's cooked in coconut milk with vegetables.

EH: Mmhm. And is it your own spice blend?

EL: Mmhm. It was his own. His spice blend.

DL: And that's the thing—when people, you know, for years we've been here, these people, they just hooked to one thing—it's what we call typical American. They get stuck with adobo, that's the only thing they order—they don't want to try anything else.

EL: Yeah, and then they just stuck with teriyaki...

DL: Whatever they like, that's all they eat... that's all they order, all the time, no matter what. You try and introduce different things—they stick to what they like.

EL: And some people like the curry.

DL: Yep. There's the curry people, the teriyaki people, the sweet and sour people...

EH: (laughs)

DL: There's adobo people—I mean you name it.

EL: And there's also beef caldereta, it's like a stew. Spicy stew. And it's how you say... how you introduce caldereta?

DL: Caldereta is actually also... was also like a Spanish stew, but we use different spices on it that makes it spicy and then—it's basically like a stew basically, but it's a little different than a stew because of the spices that we're using. Because you know when you do a stew you just do tomato sauce. Tomato paste, that's it. This is a different kind of spices that we're using. That's also from Spanish, actually, caldereta.

EL: You know we use a mix, like a mix of Filipino mix, though, it's not the, you know, it's not the tomato paste and... well, we had that... apritata, menudo. Menudo is Spanish also... like the... isn't that a singer the menudo?

EH: Yeah! (laughs)

EL: I think that... I think that's where that came from! Menudo!

DL: Apritata, menudo, caldereta.

EL: There's the same... no... caldereta's not the same as menudo.

DL: Well, they're more like... there's similarities.

EL: But they look like the same, look like the stew, but it's different taste. That's the menudo. So. That's chicken or pork menudo.

EH: And is Filipino food spicy, generally?

EL: No.

DL: Not really, no.

EL: But we can make it spicy.

EH: When you eat it, do you eat it spicy?

EL: Mmhn. No.

DL: There's a place in Philippines that part of... like... we call it South, I believe... they like spicy. Everything has to be spicy. They cook... they cook that little red pepper into coconut milk and they eat it like that. I mean spicy! You name it. I mean... but more places in Philippines... they don't... they don't prepare hot...

EL: No. No. Just somebody on the Visayas region?

DL: No, Bicol region.

EL: Bicol region? Because there's 3 big islands in the Philippines. Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

EH: Okay.

EL: So, you know, those big islands, I mean—is that in south?

DL: Yeah.

EL: In south, they like spicy. But we don't... we can make it spicy but we don't want to... we don't want them to be spicy. They don't like spicy. Not all people like spicy. So, if they want spicy, we can make it spicy.

EH: Right.

DL: It's the same thing in Thailand. Some Thailand, some part of Thailand people, they like spicy spicy, there are some part of Thailand, they don't like spicy. It's the same thing here in America!

EH: Yep!

DL: Wherever it's cold weather, they like spicy. You go north, they like spicy. No! Actually the warmer they like spicy!

EH: I think warmer. Yeah.

DL: You go south, they like spicy, they've got all... you know. They like Cajun and everything.

EH: Right.

DL: So, it's kind of different sometimes (laughs)

EL: We also have shrimp, you know, we have shrimp, but our shrimp has 2 shrimp—one with the head and one with just a...

DL: Well, we try to watch what we're fixing here because there's a lot of food allergies, you know, some allergic to seafood, seashell and things like that. Some are allergic to mushroom, some are allergic to... um...

EL: Beansprout.

DL: Beansprout.

EH: Wow!

EL: But we don't make...

DL: Well, we try to watch the beansprout because that's one thing you've got to watch the beansprout because they get... they get...

EL: We don't make anything with beansprout.

DL: Yeah, cause you can get salmonella quick.

EH: Oh, I didn't know that.

DL: You gotta watch it. And it's kind of weird sometimes because even some of them, like a customer who come in here, they're allergic to soy sauce. So we have to watch everything that we have to cook. That's why sometimes they ask the server so the server will call me and I have to explain everything, you know, because there's some of them are really allergic to... especially the wheat. There's some people who are allergic to wheat. They don't want that...their food to get close to the other foods because the food allergies.

EL: I think what she's basically wanting is more of the organic and cultural, right?

EH: Well, a little, but it's all interesting though. Especially how you're adapting to West Virginia tastes too. That's part of it.

EL: Yes.

EH: What island are you from?

EL: Luzon. We both from Luzon.

EH: And that's in the middle?

DL: That's the main island.

EH: That's the main island? Okay.

EL: Luzon... it's like in... close to the capital of Manilla, which is this here. This is Manilla (points at picture on wall).

EH: Okay.

EL: And you know, then um, the pictures over here is like the beach over here...

EH: Mmhm, oh yeah, I remember.

EL: Yeah, it's a... my son took those pictures. They are from the Philippines.

EH: Okay. Yeah. Um, what else—oh, are there ingredients that are hard to get here?

45:11

EL: Yeah. We have to go... actually we have to go to Maryland to go get the ingredients. Asian...

EH: Where in Maryland?

EL: You know, in the Asian um... Asian store.

EH: Mmhm. Like H Mart or...?

EL: No, it's a Filipino... it's a Filipino warehouse.

EH: Wow!

EL: Yeah, he has to go there once a month to travel just to get the supply.

EH: And what are the things he has to get there?

EL: The spices. Some of the spices that you know, we need for, you know, for um... and the noodles, you know, those noodles... you don't just get it... well I guess you can get it in Columbus, but it's cheaper if we travel to um, he travel to Maryland and get it because he can get everything there. But in Columbus, you don't get everything there.

EH: Okay.

EL: So, he travels once a month just to get the supply.

EH: Wow. Um, I just discovered—there's an Asian Market and then there's a spice market which is also—they have like Asian, Indian, African foods.

EL: Over there?

EH: In Charleston.

EL: In Charleston, yes.

46:38

EL: I think it's Indian, right?

EH: Yeah. I think it's an Indian family...

EL: Yeah, an Indian family owns it.

EH: Yeah.

EL: And you know, they also go... what I heard... is that they also go to get some stuff from there—where we, where we buy our stuff, they also get their stuff right there. Filipino. Yeah. The Filipino supply. Yes. They go there too.

EH: Well, maybe I'll take some photos of this (the plate of food).

EL: Sure. But does it look good now? I don't think...is that...

EH: I think it looks good!

EL: I don't think it looks good to me!

EH: No?

EL: No. No. I think you. She's going to take photos of it... I don't think...that thing looks...

EH: I think it looks good!

EL: It don't look good in my pictures.

EH: Well, I was gonna take it outside and use the natural light.

DL: Yeah! That's fine.

EH: I can make it look good.

DL: Yeah! It's just already cold, that's why.

EH: I know, I know. I'm sorry. Sitting here...

EL: Well I mean, can you, so do you just... that or do you want something else to take pictures with?

EH: Well I was thinking I'd take your picture, I'd take a photo of food and maybe some of the things you have up front. Maybe I'd get some ice cream and take a picture of that too.

EL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. The purple ice cream?

EH: Yeah!

EL: Okay. But, see if you can make that look good.

EH: I will! (laughs) I think it looks good!

EL: Because it's... that's adobo but you know...

DL: It's already cold.

EL: I'm the one that's taking pictures in there, but then...like that? I cannot make it look good. That don't look good.

EH: Well I took one when I was here last time with my...

EL: Regular phone? Let me see.

EH: Yeah. I think it turned out pretty well. I posted it on our Instagram.

EL: So you... you guys have Instagram?

EH: That's what I had. (shows her photo)

EL: That looks good. That's sweet and sour.

DL: Who did that?

EH: That's yours! That's when I was here a few weeks ago.

DL: Really?! See ya Tara (to waitress). Really?!

EL: That's sweet and sour, but then, what's that dark there?

EH: I think that's just the sauce.

EL: Hmm?

EH: That's the sauce on the meat.

EL: That's the sweet and sour didn't it?

EH: I think that's what I got.

EL: Hmm?

EH: I think that's what I got.

EL: Uh-huh. Okay. That's a... no.

EH: Did I tag you guys in it? You have Instagram don't you? Or no.

EL: Yeah! Well, it says Philippines Best Food.

EH: Okay, yeah.

EL: I mean I have an Instagram that says Philippines Best Food.

EH: Oh yeah, see? I tagged you right there. That's yours, right?

EL: Yeah! That's me! Yep. I did that...

EH: So they can find it. Cause people... Oh, I guess... I thought people commented. Cause I posted it on Twitter too and I think people...

EL: I don't have twitter. I need to go sign up for Twitter. Huh?

EH: It's helpful to have all of it because some people are on Instagram and not Twitter and some people are on Twitter and not Instagram.

EL: Hmm. So...

EH: So is there Japanese influence too?

DL: Yeah!

EL: Yeah!

DL: Pretty much.

EH: Cause I thought your menu mentioned that.

EL: Mentions Japanese, Spanish, Chinese.

DL: It's more like all those part of Asian surrounding.

EL: You know the Mexican because the burrito, you know, is... you know.

DL: It's all there. Pretty much like the surrounding Asia pretty much.

EH: Yeah.

EL: Can you do it just so I know?

EH: (laughs) she's worried about it.

EL: It's just dark...

DL: It's just dark in here!

EH: Yeah. I'm gonna take it outside. But before I stop this, is there anything else you'd like to add?

51:05

EL: The... oh um, the lechon... that's another traditional... lechon we have it on the buffet. Lechon is like the pork shoulder. Is that pork shoulder?

DL: Well actually it's a roast beef.

EL: It's a roast beef. It has the skin on and stuff. That's the traditional...

DL: Filipino likes the skin crunchy. That's what they like. Especially, there's a lot of festivals going on in the Philippines and they always do the whole pig. Which, I've tried that here. We've been trying that, we got a cooker that we do that, but the only problem is, it's hard to get a nice pig. I mean...

EH: Yeah.

EL: Let me just have... can you just have them make her a fresh one?

EH: No! I don't want to make them make another!

EL: Huh?

EH: I don't want to have you make another one!

EL: But I want it to look good in the picture, you know what I mean? I mean that's not...if my son, he's a photographer, he owns FSD images... if he saw that... you know...

EH: Well I mean, I will make sure it looks good.

EL: Huh?

EH: If you want to replace it, but I think it looks good. Especially when I take it outside. I have my nice camera too that I'll use.

EL: Huh?

EH: I have my nice camera that I'll use.

EL: Um... I'll just... I'll see what she, what she... like what... what kind of food that you want me to have the pictures with?

EH: Well, I don't want to make you make more food! Whatever you have I'll take pictures of, or I could come back to the kitchen...whatever you want. But I was just thinking—you saw our website, right?

EL: Mmhm.

EH: And we have some profiles of people with interviews so I am taking photos that I'll put on our website of you two and the food and the restaurant.

EL: Yes.

EH: Whatever you want to do, but I don't want to make you make more food.

EL: You want to, you know, you want us to have pictures?

EH: Yeah! I was thinking maybe with...

EL: With the, with the girls?

EH: Sure!

EL: I mean with my cook and stuff?

EH: Sure! Or I can just do you two.

EL: Huh?

EH: Or we can go outside and I could take it on the porch in front of the restaurant 'cause it's nice light out there.

EL: Or maybe you can take a picture of us in the kitchen.

EH: Sure!

EL: Huh?

EH: Yeah! Okay, whatever you want.

EL: Okay. Because I want... so that way they can be also in the picture.

EH: Sure.

EL: I'll just what I can do is maybe take the fork and see maybe so it won't look dry.

EH: Yeah, there you go.

EL: Huh?

EH: Yeah, that looks good. That'll look good. Oh that looks better already.

54:17

END OF TAPE

