



"I cooked Filipino foods," says chef Evelyn Bunoan, "and I had plans to go more mainstream. So I created regional Philippine recipes to appeal to all palates."

ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

Fervent for Filipino food

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

In the local Filipino community, chef Evelyn Bunoan has a devoted following. People recognize her as a compassionate servant to the ill. The Filipina Women's Network named her one of the most influential Filipina women in the United States in 2009. Her writings appear regularly in the local Manila Mail newspaper. Crowds have sampled her meals at various folk life festivals.

But her real local effect comes at the Philippine Oriental Market and Deli in Arlington, a tiny store where, as its owner, Bunoan cooks her famous Filipino dishes — stews, noodles, pastries, rice sweets, lentils — for the savvy who stop by at noon. At that hour her market can be jammed as customers buy out her freshly cooked fare, leaving the steam tables almost empty.

Bunoan acquired the market 33 years ago. "I bought the store during Holy Week," she explains. "Most Filipinos don't work then, in observance of the last week of Lent, so we opened after Easter Sunday." After two years in operation she envisioned that "food to go" would be the next trend, so she invested in a commercial kitchen for the store and started offering delicious and healthy Filipino dishes with a homemade touch. These became instant hits. The store was subsequently featured in Best Bites column of Washingtonian magazine. While Bunoan was working for the World Bank as an executive assistant, she successfully managed her store and cooked for her customers on weekends.

Initially just a grocery store stocked with Filipino goods and ingredients, the market gradually evolved into a mini-restaurant, carryout and market. "I cooked Filipino foods," she says, "and I had plans to go more mainstream. So I created

What is your comfort food?

I am a simple person, so an avocado or a sweet potato. Mushrooms, I never run out of them at my house.

What's in your fridge?

You cannot see any junk food. There's celery, parsley, bok choy, Shanghai cabbage, and spinach.

Do you have a favorite cookbook?

"The Barefoot Contessa" and Bob Kinkead's "Kinkead's Cookbook: Recipes from Wash-

ington D.C.'s Premier Seafood Restaurant"

Where is your favorite place in the world?

I haven't traveled much, but I would like to go back to London. I just studied when I was there.

Which is your signature dish?

All of my creations are my signatures. I have already created more than 200 recipes. The inspiration comes from my husband and from our Lord.

IF YOU GO Philippine Oriental Market and Deli

- » Where: 3610 Lee Highway, Arlington
- » Info: 703-528-0300
- » Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday

regional Philippine recipes to appeal to all palates."

Driven by her passion for cooking, however, Bunoan took a major leap forward — she applied to and was accepted by Le Cordon Bleu Culinary School in London.

With a degree as a master French chef, Bunoan remembers her intensive several months in London. "I studied patisserie, food safety, French cuisine," she says. "We worked all day, and it was like studying for four years. Every day we had an exam. I always volunteered for the hardest project. If they wanted to stuff the largest salmon and suckling pig, I said I would do it."

Considering her present fame as a chef, Bunoan might secretly wish she had begun her culinary career even in childhood. As it turns out,

both her parents influenced her right from the beginning. "My mom was the best cook," she says. "She cooked very healthful foods, and she seldom served red meat, always seafood. ... I just watched her cook."

Bunoan also remembers the day as a second-grader when her father, a professional baker, came home with a very special Filipino bread, pan de sal, which she now creates from memory. "It's made with wheat flour, salt and yeast," she says. "You can just play around with the dough by adding eggs and other healthful ingredients." Bunoan now bakes and sells this special bread by request at her market.

In her quiet manner, Bunoan has found an important way to make a difference through her cooking. Inspired by the death of her best friend to cancer, Bunoan and her husband established a foundation called CHEW (Cancer Help Eat Well) Foundation, through which she cooks and delivers healthful meals — her dishes are all trimmed of excess fats, salt and sugar — to cancer patients in need. "I have known these customers for 30 years," she says. "They are just like family. They say to me, 'You cook just like my mom. You cook like you care for us.'" She does.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

The future of 2009 cabernet

Once a year, hundreds of people gather to taste very young California wines during the annual California Barrel Tasting.

The event was conceived by the late Addy Bassin, original owner of D.C. wine shop MacArthur Beverages, and was designed to mimic Bordeaux's Union de Grand Cru, the annual weeklong affair where members of the wine trade get a sneak peak of newly vinified French wines.

Bassin wanted to give Washington-area consumers the same type of exposure to young California wines that the French had developed so that they could have an opportunity to purchase the not-yet-released domestic wines at a discount. Unfortunately, Addy died shortly after the first event. His partner and widow, Ruth, has continued the event in Addy's memory and it has since become a popular fundraiser for the Addy and Bruce Bassin Memorial Cancer Research Fund at George Washington University Medical Center.

This year, the 26th Annual California Barrel Tasting featured more than 60 wines from 37 different wineries, mostly from the acclaimed 2009 vintage. Since the wines are still aging in barrels, they are not commercially available for a year or two later, so the wines are offered now at a price below the future retail price. This practice is referred to as buying "futures" and is a savvy way to purchase collectable wines at a discount.

If you are thinking about buying a few wines to save for a special occasion, the 2009 vintage in Napa Valley is a particularly good year to consider. Many of the wines I tasted at the event possessed excellent fruit concentration, but more importantly, excellent balance, with firm tannins and ample acidity. Most of these wines will drink well for 10-plus years, if you can resist the urge to open them up sooner.

Note: Prices listed are the "pre-release" price offered through MacArthur Beverages (202-338-1433) and are subject to availability and later delivery. Unless otherwise noted, all wines are from Napa Valley, Calif.

Best values under \$50

2009 Girard Artistry (\$33) A Bordeaux-style blend that possesses lovely blackberry and ripe plum fruit on a supple frame. The smooth tannins definitely add enough support for medium-to-long-term aging.

2009 Ruston Family Vineyards Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$36) A remarkable value featuring luxuriant, ripe black fruit, toasty oak and supple tannins. This wine will drink well young, but even better with five to six years of bottle age.

2009 Blue Rock Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma Valley (\$40) One of the few wines in the tasting from Sonoma Valley, this entry absolutely rocks (no pun intended). It is a jammy, chewy wine with ripe fruit, firm tannins and abundant acidity that provides great structure and balance.

2008 Ravenswood Winery Icon, Sonoma Valley (\$43) With 35 years in the business, Joel Peterson knows a thing or two about making wine. The 2008 Icon has a wonderful mouthfeel and delivers ripe red and black fruit over the entire palate. The finish has excellent balance and structure.

2008 John Anthony Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (\$45) Even though this is from the 2008 vintage, it is still available as a future. It possesses amazing balance and structure that carries wonderful dark fruit flavors over the entire palate.

Big collectables

2009 EMH "Black Cat" Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60) Each year, I hesitate to write about this wonderfully opulent, fruit-driven wine since there are only 160 cases produced from the tiny vineyard that covers just two-thirds of an acre. This year's offering features blackberry and cassis notes that are beautifully integrated with silky tannins and abundant acidity. The persistent finish offers lingering hints of dark plum and cocoa.

2009 Ridge Vineyards Monte Bello Santa Cruz Mountains (\$85) This perennial big wine hails from a legendary vineyard that sits high up in the Santa Cruz Mountains and produces a spicy, black fruit-oriented wine supported by firm, chewy tannins. It will definitely require five-plus years of aging at home.

