

Michelle

The Original Barrio Fiesta of Manila

It's a rainy day. You look around on the wet streets and go into the first restaurant that catches your eye. Or maybe, your friend told you about a place that was close to your house and you decided to give it a try. It might even be possible that you didn't know where to go for dinner, so you Googled "restaurants near me." Whatever the case, you've ended up at The Original Barrio Fiesta of Manila, a Filipino restaurant in Glendale, CA. From the outside, it looks pretty normal.

Filipino food is uniquely different. The Philippines, a nation formed by a collection of islands, has played host to many countries that have all left their mark on Filipino culture. Its cuisine may remind you of something you might find in Hawaii but with distinct Spanish influences, as it was a colony of Spain for over one hundred years. The food shares some things in common with its better-known cousins in China and Japan, but with a touch of the islands.

When you sit down at the table, you look around. Colorful red walls greet you, and some of the art resembles something you might see at your local Mexican eatery. Filipino commercials and news programs play on TVs, accompanied by a soundtrack of modern pop music. The hostess brings you your kalamansi juice. Also known as Filipino lemonade, this sweet juice is made from the kalamansi (also spelled calamansi) fruit, a hybrid citrus fruit common in the Philippines. The other item she sets down is a fresh young coconut. This coconut is sweeter than the green coconuts you would find in the Philippines. Then the server takes your order. Assuming that it's your first time here, the options seem endless, and you can't pronounce most of the things on the menu. Eventually, you order several dishes, including chicken adobo, which is common in Filipino restaurants. The appetizers come first. Today, you decided to order egg rolls and tempura shrimp, two dishes you might already be familiar with, depending on how many Japanese restaurants you've been to. They are fried to a beautiful golden-brown crisp, both accompanied by a tangy vinegar sauce, and a dipping sauce whose primary ingredient seems to be salty soy sauce. These are delicious, but you can get them just about at any Asian joint in the area. Why did you come here again? That's when the bulalo arrives. It's a mild, but somehow not bland bone broth, with bits of stewed beef and lots of vegetables. Many other dishes come as well. There's the traditional chicken adobo: chicken that falls away from the bone, coated with a tangy sauce; garlicky rice with tons of butter; assorted vegetables in a sauce reminiscent of Indian curry; and a hot noodle salad featuring both Chinese rice noodles and slippery clear ones, combined with tofu and vegetables.

The food is all scrumptious, and fortunately, you've saved room for dessert. Of all the delicious-looking Filipino desserts, you decide to go with one of the better-known ones, halo-halo, which literally means mix-mix. You pay an extra \$2 to get this with the infamous purple yam ice cream that seems to be dominating the exotic dessert industry. The milkshake glass

comes filled to the brim. It consists of shaved ice and creamy coconut sauce over colorful fruits topped with the purple yam ice cream and crispy fried rice bits. Refreshing and not too rich, this crunchy, creamy masterpiece is good enough to eat the entire thing, even though you know your stomach is stuffed. You pay your bill and leave, vowing to return.

The Original Barrio Fiesta of Manila, (818) 552-2855, 818 N Pacific Ave & Arden Ave, Glendale, CA 91203, USA



Kalamansi Juice and Fresh Coconut



Eggrolls



Halo-Halo



Noodle Salad



Chicken Adobo