

## Celebrating New Year The Filipino Way



*A news from one of the the country's leading newspapers: "Despite the dim economic prospects, nine out of 10 Filipinos are entering the new year with hope, rather than with fear, according to results of an independent survey released Monday." (Philippine Daily Inquirer 12/29/2008)*

*Filipinos* are generally hopeful despite the on going global economic crisis. *Here in the province*, seldom that the financial crunch is discussed, if any. They do not worry to much about other things in the world. Most of them think about their love ones, food for the table and their family's future.



We usually have December 31 as a non-working holiday, giving ample time for Filipinos to prepare for the New Year's eve celebration. This year, **guess what?** The very good government declared **more than a week of non-working holiday** (started last Christmas) which ends on Sunday after new year! I hope they realize the economic impact of this declaration! Well, since I cannot change that anymore, I'd rather enjoy and make the most out of it.

With **the new year bringing in new hopes**, I observe most of us still following what is the usual Filipino tradition of welcoming the new year.



Compared to other countries, we Filipinos celebrate the new year differently. We prepare **a lot of** things and things get busier and busier as the 12 midnight gets near. I personally find it extravagant and sometimes defy logic but really fun. What can I do? I may have questions (asking for reasons)... **But** I grew up with it and has learned to appreciate it! **Join the fun of celebrating New the Pinoy Way!**

**Pinoys celebrate with a bang!!**

**Yes. Literally.** With a lot of **firecrackers** and **fireworks!**



Even weeks before Christmas, vendors of fire crackers and fireworks are usual part of the scenery along roads and highways as well as sidewalks of major public places.

The belief that **firecrackers** and **loud noises** drive away evil spirits and bad luck is inherited from the Chinese. Despite the warning from government agencies (Department of Health) of the hazards of using pyrotechnic devices, this tradition still lives on. / remember when I was young and living amongst the military neighborhood, **the use of gun and ammo** during new year revelry is as common



as seeing clouds in the sky. I thought it was just normal (being a son of a member of the Philippine Army). Good thing the government issued a ban on the use of guns.

Now its use is a thing of the past.

Despite warnings from concerned individuals and organization, the Filipino tradition of welcoming the new year with **lights and sounds** lives on. This is generally done during new year's eve.

The province of **Bulacan**, particularly the towns of **Sta. Maria** and **Bocaue** is where we can find the manufacturers of pyrotechnic products. Some of the leading manufacturers from this province won in major competitions on fireworks in the Philippines and abroad! There was a couple of years in the past when we visit a known factory in Bulacan around November to buy the items cheaper. The price more than doubles as new year approaches.



**Famous** among the **types of paputok** are: Rebentador (or Labentador), trianggulo, pla-pla, super lolo, bawang, sinturon ni Hudas (Judas' belt), Crying Cow (amazing how it copies the loud sound of cow!), Kwutis (baby rockets), picollo, Watusi. (There are new items this year, but I am not sure about how the new firecrackers are called)

(As I type this the word paputok, I erroneously typed paputol which means 'to cut or severe' - a warning that if not carefully used, these paputok could result to serious injuries like loss of finger or worse.)

**Lights and fireworks** display items are called fountain (of various types including silver and gold), luis, roman candle, trompillo.



Some very impressive aerial fireworks display items can be made to order.

### **Natural and Environment-Friendly Noisemakers**

We also have people in the province that does not use these elaborate and sometimes very expensive fireworks. Innovative people use empty cans to be tied on a string and attached to a vehicle (a jeepney, a bicycle or car). They drive around the barangay or village pulling the empty cans making loud noises on the street.



We also use **Torotot** or trumpets or horns usually made from bamboo. Now, horns are decorated and made into shape like hats and small trumpets. Others are already made from plastics.

**Batya** or large wash basins that are made from GI sheets are also being used as gongs!

*Those* with motor vehicles traditionally turns on the ignition and honks endlessly at the strike of midnight.



**Bumbong** is a canon made from bamboo. They put a white powder (not gun powder) called kalburo (carbide) in one end and place fire like the canon of the old days. This produces a really loud bang.

## **Media Noche Feast**

*Food. Food. Food!*

Whatever you have on your table on new year's day is what you will have the whole year round. That is what people believe, that is why food is so abundant in welcoming the new year.



There are also traditional food that needs to be seen on the table, believed to bring good luck for the coming year.

We usually have bulalo soup (beef hind shank stew), kare-kare (vegetable stew with ox tail and tripe), Pinoy style spaghetti, rice, rice cakes (I prepared palitaw from glutinous rice with sugar, sesame seed and peanut



toppings), fruit salad and my famous crema de fruta. Others have ham, fried lumpia and fresh lumpia on their table.

## Fruits. Fruits. Fruits



A tradition of having twelve rounded fruits is also passed on to us by the Chinese. This is kinda hard to follow but we usually manage. The 12 fruits is believed to bring in good fortune for the coming year.

Filipinos usually have grapes (some are hanged on doorways), young coco, mango, calamansi, citrus (dalandan or dalanghita), oranges, ponkan, kiat kiat, pomelo... Ahh never ending fruits.

## The Family Dinner



Famously called **media noche** -the family midnight dinner. What is important in media noche is right after the revelry, the family sits down on the dining table together. *Complete*. Everyone gets together around the table and partake the food.

**T**his one thing I really appreciate and try to impart to the younger generation.



## Other Beliefs and Practices

Aside from lighting firecrackers and having firework displays that is (Chinese-oriented) believed to drive away ominous or evil spirits and bad luck,



we Filipinos have other countless beliefs and traditions in welcoming the new year. Most, if not all of the practices are believed to bring in good luck and prosperity in the new year.

As the countdown for the New Year gets nearer, everyone gets busier preparing and trying to follow beliefs and traditions. It varies from one region to another in some little way. But some are well-known, like...

- The Holy Mass before midnight. A tradition that the whole family goes to church together before the New Year. It was a traditional midnight mass, but moved earlier so the family can get home earlier and have their media noche feast.
- Polka dot designed clothes. Wear something with circle and polka dot designs, believed to represent money. Colors representing prosperity like red and gold is also usually worn. (I wore orange! Hehehe!)
- Coins in the pocket to jingle and make noise. Again, money matters! It won't hurt if you'll have some crisp bills as well.

- Coins placed on windows and in major ventilations. Other homes also place couns on their staircases.
- Coins thrown in the house as the midnight clock strikes.
- In the house, all doors and windows should be open .All lights should also be turned on. The entire house should be lively! Open doors and lights believe to welcome graces and blessings the whole year.



- Twelve eggs and twelve round fruits should be on the table as it is a sign of prosperity for the next twelve months! (There was a change as I listen to some people.. they require 13 fruits now... to exceed what expectations? Hehehe!)
- Water containers, rice containers, salt containers filled to the brim. For Ilocano's... do not forget the *bagoong container!*
- I like the part that some people pay off their debts before new year! Some are too irresponsible that creditors do not trust them anymore! At least, the tradition will entice them to pay!
- When I was a child, we were asked to jump at the strike of midnight. Believed to make us grow taller. Hm.. something went wrong here. (I think, I did not jump that high)

All the revelries and fireworks come to life an hour before midnight... Reaches its highlight when the clock strikes twelve as everyone welcomes the new year. Around 1 am, everyone starts to rest but we can still hear and see fireworks from time to time.



The cacophony of *loud noises and sounds of merrymaking* are not only meant to



celebrate the coming of the New Year. The food, the fruits and traditions are not only meant to bring in the fortune and a bountiful new year. All these brouhaha is also a part of a Filipino family life. *These traditions from the point of preparation to the actual celebration brings us all together.*

**W**hat is important here is that we are celebrating and welcoming the new year together. **A**s one big complete family!



Ref.: <http://promdi-pinoy.blogspot.com/2008/12/celebrating-new-year-filipino-way.html>