



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES CHICAGO

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FILIPINO-AMERICAN TV PERSONALITY AND RESTAURATEUR EXPLORES HIS CULTURAL AND CULINARY ROOTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Chicago 23 July 2017 – As part of Filipino Restaurant Week and Filipino American History Month, the Philippine Consulate General in Chicago participated in the exclusive preview and culinary experience launching Mr. Billy Dec's documentary about the Philippines entitled "Food. Roots." at Sunda Restaurant in downtown Chicago on 25 October 2019.

The documentary, which will be aired on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in March 2020, revolves around Mr. Dec's journey back to his mother's native Philippines to find his last living elders, learn the recipes of his ancestors, and gain a deeper understanding of his cultural and culinary identity. For Mr. Dec, the documentary is a passion project not just to share his journey but to also encourage others to search out, learn, celebrate their own cultural and family background and stories.

During the preview, Mr. Dec, an Emmy-Award winning TV personality and owner of Sunda Restaurant, discussed his journey back home, including to his grandfather's hometown of Vigan. In his stirring remarks, he shared, "What's so amazing about 'Food.Roots.' is the idea that you go back in time to learn the recipes of your ancestors, and you find out a lot more about what's on the plate. You find out a lot about your family's culture, your struggles, your timeline, your wants, needs and desires, successes and failures – in a sense, all the wonderful things that I've come to embrace." He shared that he even hiked up to Kalinga province to get his first tattoo from the legendary Whang-Od Oggay, the oldest *mambabatok* (traditional Kalinga tattooist), who imprinted a serpent eagle on Mr. Dec's chest to symbolize heavenly guidance from his ancestors in his journey, as well as strength and bravery.

Sunda, one of the participating restaurants of Chicago Filipino Restaurant Week, was recently in the social media spotlight with a viral video about its Kamayan Feast (boodle fight), which Billy also discusses briefly. During the preview, Filipino-American Executive Chef Louie Yu prepared *lechon kawali*, *ginataang* mussels, oxtail *kare-kare* and mini *ube* bites for the guests. Cocktails, including Manila Sunrise (with a dash of Tanduay Rum) and Philippine Sea, were also served.

"Food. Roots." gives viewers the opportunity to accompany Dec by plane, boat, motorcycle, jeepney and foot, as he searches through bustling metropolitan cities, tiny remote islands to find his family members. To learn more about his documentary and how the community can support the project, please visit <https://billydec.com/documentary>. **END**





Billy Dec discusses his journey to his mother's native Philippines. On the screen is the legendary tattoo artist Whang-Od, who imprinted a serpent eagle on Dec's chest to symbolize heavenly guidance from his ancestors in his journey, as well as strength and bravery.



Executive Chef Louie Yu of Sunda (right) serves up hearty portions of lechon kawali and other dishes to (L-R) Consul Ryan Francis D. Gener and Mr. Ruben Salazar of the Philippine American Cultural Foundation.



(L-R) Ms. Jelly Carandang of the Filipino American National History Society, Mr. Ruben Salazar of the Philippine American Cultural Foundation, Jenne Vailoces owner of Jennivee's Bakery and Mr. Noly C. Dulay, Cultural Officer.