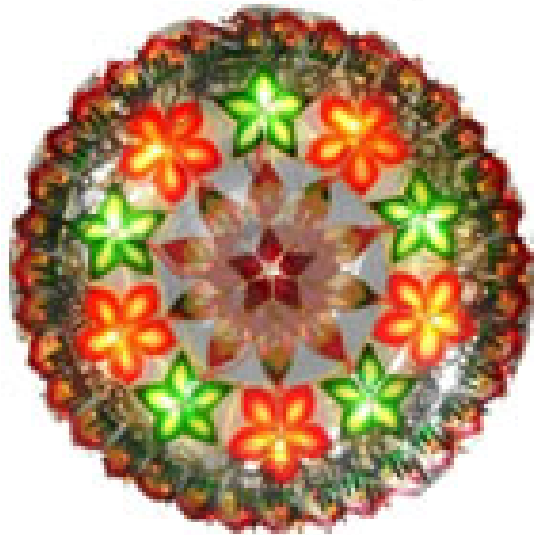


Filipino Martial Arts

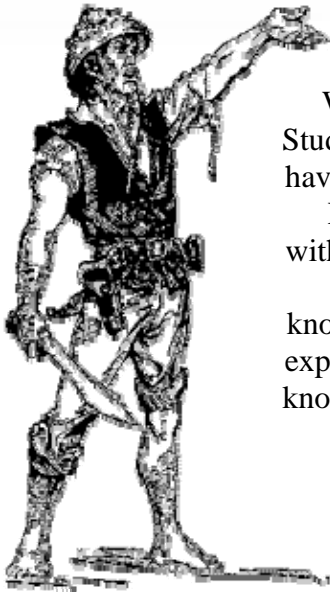


Digest

Wishes All
Merry Christmas
&
A Prosperous
Happy New Year



Wishing all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous and Happy New Year.



The FMAdigest Staff would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Most Prosperous New Years.

We would like to thank the Grandmasters, Masters, Instructors, Students, Writers, and Photographers for the contributions they have made to the FMAdigest this year.

Especially we would like to thank the Subscribers who for without them the FMAdigest would not be possible.

We are proud to be of service in spreading the knowledge of the Filipino marital arts and the Philippine culture, expressing my gratitude to all who have contributed their knowledge and personal experiences.

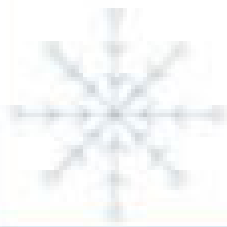
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*Sa lahat ng mga tagatangkilik ng FMAdigest,
Maraming salamat! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!*

Maligayang Pasko

Christmas in the Philippines



The Philippines is known as the "**Land of Fiestas**," and at Christmas time, this is especially true. Filipinos are proud to proclaim their Christmas celebration to be the longest and merriest in the world. It begins formally on December 16 with attendance at the first of nine pre-dawn or early morning masses and continues on nonstop until the first Sunday of January, **Feast of the Three Kings**, the official end of the season.

The Philippines is the only Asian country where Christians predominate. Majority of its people are Roman Catholic. Christmas, therefore, is an extremely important and revered holiday for most Filipinos. It is a time for family, for sharing, for giving, and a time for food, fun, and friendship.

To most Filipinos, Christmas is the most anticipated fiesta of the year and is celebrated accordingly. The splendid climate of this tropical island nation, the abundance and beauty of its flowers, and lovely landscape, its multitude of culinary delights, and above all its warm-hearted people with their true devotion to family and faith all contribute to a holiday celebrated in the true Philippines fiesta tradition.

Filipino Christmas Decors

There is no winter or snow in the Philippines at Christmas time. There are very few pine trees. There is no traditional Yule log or fetching of the pine sprigs from the woods. And Santa Claus though visible in displays and believed by most Filipino children to exist, seldom comes bearing gifts. Even without snow or pine trees, there's no doubt its Christmas in the Philippines. Filipino Christmas decorations are abundant and beautiful.

The bamboo parol (pah-role), or star lantern, is the symbol of Christmas in the Philippines, representing the guiding light, the star of Bethlehem. It emits a warmth unparalleled among holiday adornments and is unique to the Philippines. Filipinos enjoy decorating their homes not only with star lanterns but also with all sorts of Christmas decors. Brightly colored buntings or streamers are hung inside and out. Often, Christmas cards that illustrate scenes in the Philippines are pinned on red and green ribbons. The

cards are then hung in the sala, or living room, for all to enjoy. Candles and wreaths are also common adornments. Recently, Filipinos have begun choosing wreaths and other decorations made with local native materials rather than those patterned after western designs. And many houses, particularly those in the urban areas are strung with tiny multi-colored lights both inside and out. Most Filipinos think that decorating their homes for the Christmas holidays is a must.

Filipino Christmas Traditions

Christmas in the Philippines is a mixture of Western and native Filipino traditions. Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, sending Christmas cards, and singing carols have all been inherited from the cultures of the West. However, these have all been adapted to fit the nature and personality of the Filipino people.

Christmas Eve in the Philippines is one of the traditions most families celebrate. It is a night without sleep and a continuous celebration moving right into Christmas Day. As December 24th dawns, the last Mass of Simbang Gabi *is* attended; then preparation begins for Noche Buena, which is a family feast that takes place after midnight.

The **Noche Buena** is very much like an open house celebration. Family, friends, relatives, and neighbors drop by to wish every family member "**Maligayang Pasko**" (Merry Christmas). Food is in abundance, often served in buffet style. Guests or visitors partake of the food prepared by the host family (even though they are already full or bloated!). Among the typical foods prepared in the Philippines during Christmas are: lechon (roasted pig), pancit, barbecue, rice, adobo, cakes (Western and native rice cakes), lumpia, etc. There is also an abundance of San Miguel beer, wine, and liquor, which makes the celebration of Christmas indeed intoxicating!

The streets are well lit and are full of activities. The children run in and out of the house to play, to eat, and to play again. The Christmas Eve gathering provides an opportunity for a reunion of immediate and distant family members. Some families may choose to exchange gifts at this time; others wait until Christmas day.

In general, the center of a family's Christmas gathering is always the lola, the endearing term used for a family matriarch or grandmother, who is deeply respected, highly revered, and always present. Filipinos remember how their lola had their children form a line and step up to receive a small gift of some coins. The older the child, the more coins he or she receives.

Some families have a talent show during Christmas Eve celebration. Children are asked to perform. One might sing a Christmas song, others might play a musical instrument, or others may recite a poem or do a dance. The celebration continues until about 6 o'clock in the morning. Those who cannot attend Mass the night before will go to the morning Mass on Christmas day.

Christmas day is a popular day for children to visit their uncles, aunts, godmothers, and godfathers. At each home they are presented with a gift, usually candy, money, or a small toy. Food and drinks are also offered at each stop. It is a day of family closeness, and everyone wishes good cheer and glad tidings.

Holiday Food

As everyone begins arriving home after midnight Mass, the little ones are awakened from their naps. The food is brought out and the festivities begin. The table is set buffet style with as many 15-20 food items. The following food recipes are prepared for this festivity:

Bibingka

Puto Bungbong

Lechon

(Pan-Fried Roast Pork)

Kare-Kare

(Oxtail Stew in Peanut Butter Sauce)

Meat Turnovers

Rellenong Manok

(Baked Stuffed Chicken)

Banana Fritters

Ukoy

(Shrimp Snacks)

Arroz Caldo

(Chicken Rice Soup)

Churros

(Crullers)

Salabat

(Ginger Tea)

Tsokolate

(Hot Chocolate)



Simbang Gabi

Starting after midnight tonight (15 December), church bells will be ringing very early in the morning until Christmas Day. Today marks the beginning of the Christmas novena, or Simbang Gabi, in Tagalog. For Filipino Catholics the nine-day celebration before Christmas is a tradition with deep roots in the country's religious culture. Literally, simbang gabi means "night worship." The name comes from the Catholic custom of gathering for the celebration of the Eucharist in the pre-dawn hours on each of the nine days before Christmas. Hence, this celebration is also known by its popular Spanish name as the misa de gallo, or "mass of the rooster." Catholic churches throughout the country will be ringing their bells around 3:00 or 3:30 in the morning long before the rooster's crow.

The origins of this Filipino custom are obscure. Perhaps the tradition came from Mexico, like many Catholic practices and devotions found in the Philippines. One old Spanish name for this pre-Christmas series of daily masses is Misa de Aguinaldo. The phrase offers some insight into the meaning of simbang gabi. In Spanish aguinaldo means a gift. So Misa de Aguinaldo suggests a gift for the Child Jesus. Whatever its title, this pre-Christmas observance is surely a sacrifice of love for it requires dedication and discipline to get out of bed so early while yet fulfilling all one's daily duties.

Over the generations, local Filipino faith communities have creatively adapted simbang gabi. While only candles and lanterns are used in rural areas, as in centuries past, most churches today have electric lights, lanterns, and sound systems in keeping with the economic means of the congregation. So amplifiers now blare the Christmas music and the readings from the World of God and the Eucharistic prayers. Over adaptations are deeper. For example, many urban parishes now celebrate simbang gabi around 8 or 9 in the evening, not just in the morning, in order to accommodate the needs of people on a great variety of work schedules. The custom is also kept among Filipinos living elsewhere in the world. No matter how or when this celebration takes place, the annual simbang gabi provides a strong indication of the depth of Catholicism in the hearts of Filipinos.

For those not taking in this celebration, simbang gabi may appear to be too much noise too early in the morning. But a modicum of reflection easily allows everyone to gain insight into the deeper meaning of this celebration. Simbang gabi expresses the faith of Filipinos who hold the same core belief as all Christians, namely, that God is present in human history, even in the simple joys and anxieties of life's humblest activities. Filipino Catholics who sincerely live their belief in the incarnation merit the respect and admiration of the whole nation.

So, let the bells of the Misa de Gallo break the pre-dawn silence of the whole land. The bells offer a message of hope in God and of hope for peace on earth.

The Puto Bumbong **A Traditional Filipino Christmas Treat**

The origin of Puto Bumbong is not known but evidently dates back to the early Spanish era. It was believed to have been brought over from Mexico by Legazpi and Urdaneta. Some trace it to the pastoral times when fishermen kept vigil and then proceeded to church at dawn to hear Mass. After the dawn Mass, they would relieve their hunger and weariness with puto bumbong and salabat (ginger tea).

Others attribute it to the harvest season when farmers would attend Mass and offer their thanksgiving for abundant grain.



A purple-colored Filipino dessert made of sweet rice cooked in hollow bamboo tubes that are placed on a special steamer-cooker. When cooked, they are removed from the bamboo tubes, spread with butter and sprinkled with sugar and niyog (grated coconut). They are then wrapped in wilted banana leaves which keep them warm and moist until ready to be eaten. Like Bibingka, Puto Bumbong is inexorably linked with Simbang Gabi--

the Catholic mass celebrated at dawn on the nine days preceding Christmas.

Five (5) kilograms of glutinous rice
One (1) cup ordinary rice
One (1) tablespoon of food coloring (Lilac)
One (1) kilo of freshly grated matured coconut
Margarine
Sugar

- Mix glutinous rice, ordinary rice and food coloring. Soak in water for four hours. Slowly grind using a stone grinder or manual grinder. Be sure not to put too much water in while grinding, this will delay drying of milled ingredients. Too much water will cause the mixture to be sticky. Put milled ingredients onto cotton cloth. Tie corners of the cloth. Let it drip. When the mixture is almost dried, press it using a heavy object to remove excess water. Let stand overnight.

- Remove the milled ingredients from the cloth. Place it on finely woven cotton cloth. Mix and crush the milled ingredients using your hand until the finest particles pass through the cotton and fall into a container. Collect the particles.

- Boil water using the steamer. Cover it with custom-made-cover with nozzles big enough to fit bamboo tubes or metal cylinders. Cover the nozzles with cotton cloth.

- Grease cylinders with margarine then half-fill cylinders with milled ingredients. Cover the other end of the cylinder with cotton cloth. Fit the opposite end into the nozzle. Steam will come out of the cylinder when it is cooked. Before removing Puto Bumbong from the cylinder, invert position to ensure proper cooking.

- To remove Puto Bumbong from the cylinder, hold it in a vertical position and gently tap it out over a plate.

- Put sugar and freshly grated coconut as toppings. Best when served hot with ginger tea.



Bibingka

This delightful breakfast or snack is similar to a cake, but is unique to the Philippines. Traditionally baked with a special apparatus and a mainstay of the Christmas holidays, this recipe is adapted for the modern kitchen and delicious any time!

3/4 cup-sugar
1-1/4 cups-coconut milk
3 eggs
2 cups flour
1/2 tsp-salt
4 Tbsp-baking powder



1/2 cup-grated cheese,
1/2 cup-butter
1/2 cup-fresh grated coconut

- Mix sugar and coconut milk, then add beaten eggs. In a separate bowl mix the flour baking powder and salt. Combine the two mixtures and pour into a pan lined with banana leaf.
- Add the cheese and bake in 375° over for 25 minutes, basting with butter every five minutes. When fully baked sprinkle with sugar and add grated coconut to surface. Serve while still warm.

Parol or Star Lantern

Whirling white, red, and green! Pulsating purple, blue, yellow, and gold! Swirling triangles, circles, squares, pentagons, and octagons! Twinkling rhythmically, twirling endlessly through Christmas nights - this is the Philippine star lantern called the parol.

The parol (from the Spanish “farol”) is the country’s most ethnic and most graphic Christmas symbol. As such, it is perhaps the Pasko ornament dearest to Filipino hearts... and the most evocative of the fiesta spirit of the season.

Nowhere else but along this country’s sidewalks can one behold the unforgettable spectacle of parols on display. Clusters and clusters of these lanterns for sale by the hundreds hang side-by-side, row after row, layer upon layer. When these are lit simultaneously, the inky blue skies of December evenings become awash with their myriad colors so that one feels transported into the vortex of a giant kaleidoscope.

In the province of Pampanga, considered the lantern capital of the Philippines, one can witness a Christmas Eve festival of gigantic parols made of limitless range of components: paper, wood, metal, glass, shells, beads, seeds, hemp, feathers, leaves. As many as 50 craftsmen may be required to construct one giant lantern that may weigh 1,000 kilos and measure 40 feet in diameter. To come ablaze with thousands of bulbs, these parols are equipped with a safety box and a 75 KVA generator, powerful enough to light up a town. Not surprisingly, it takes a six-wheeler open truck to transport such a Pampanga parol from place to place.



Materials:

- 10 strips of wood, 1/4 inch wide 10 inches long (or strip made from matte board, 1/4 inch wide and 10 inches long)
- 5 strips of wood, 1/4 inch wide, 3/4 inches long
- 2 12 inch squares of tissue paper, white and colored
- 2 8 inch by 16 inch pieces of tissue paper, white and colored
- 5 10-inch by 3-inch pieces of colored and white tissue paper

2 pieces of thin, flexible wire cut into 6 inch lengths
 1 piece of thin, flexible wire cut into a 10-inch length
 construction paper pencil glitters
 foil ruler compass
 non-toxic glue scissors
 tape markers

Direction in constructing a Parol:



1. Make a star pattern, and glue five of the 10-inch strips of wood or matte board to make a star. Allow the glue to dry completely. Repeat with the other five strips. The two stars should be identical.
2. At the five points of one of the stars, glue the five 3/4 inch strips of wood so they are in an upright position. Allow glue to dry.
3. Place a dab of glue on the top of each of the shorter strips. Position the second star directly over the first one. Apply a bit of pressure at the joints to be sure they affix to the shorter strips.
4. To finish joining the stars, place a dab of glue at the five points of the star. Press together the points of the two stars. Use tape to secure the points until the glue dries. Remove the tape. Be careful not to pull the points apart.
5. To cover the star, place the glue on the surface of the outside strips (those that make up the points) on one side of the star. Position one of the 12-inch by 12 inch pieces of tissue paper on the side with the glue, so the star is centered on the paper. Keep the tissue as smooth and as tight as possible. Once the glue has dried, turn the star over, and repeat this step with the other 12 inch by 12 inch piece of tissue paper. Again, allow the glue to dry.
6. Trim some of the excess tissue paper, leaving enough to cover the sides of the star. Cut 7/8-inch slits in the joints.
7. Fold each flap over, and glue it to its corresponding wooden strip of the star. Once the glue dries, trim any excess paper.
8. While the star is drying, make the paper tassels. These look best if a different color tissue paper from that which covers the star is used. Fold each of the two 8 inch by 16 inch pieces of tissue paper so that the 16 inch length is in half. With the scissors, make cuts 3/8



inch wide and 6 inches long, leaving 2 inches at the folded side.

9. Open one of the tassels so that there is fringe at both ends. Fold the tassel in half length-wise, and squeeze both sides of the center. Poke one half of a 6-inch wire through the center of the tassel. Repeat these steps with the other tassel.

10. Fold the tassel in half so that all, the fringe is together. Wrap the bottom half of the wire (that which is now covered with the fringe) around the area just at the top of the fringe. Repeat with the other tassel, using the second 6-inch wire.

11. Attach the tassels to the lower points of the star by poking the 3 inches of exposed wire through the tissue paper on the star.

12. Poke 2 inches of the 10-inch wire through the tissue paper at the top point of the star. Wrap the 2 inches of wire around the point, and wrap the end around the remaining wire. Use the 8 inches of wire left over to form a hanger.

13. To cover the wires of tassels at the bottom points and to put tassels on the other three points, fold in half each of the five 10 inch pieces of tissue paper. With scissors, make cuts 1/8 inch wide and 2 1/2 inches long, leaving 1/2 inch at the top.

14. To attach the tassels, spread glue on the uncut 1/2-inch area. Carefully, wind the glued end around each of the five points of the star.

15. Decorate the star using markers, glitters, etc.

16. Cut patterns out of construction paper, and glued them on the star. Make up a pattern. To do so, fold a sheet of construction paper in half. Copy the pattern onto the paper, making sure the fold on the paper corresponds with the fold on the pattern, and then cut the pattern out. Use a zigzag motion with the scissors to create a unique edge. Unfold the paper, and place glue only on the longer edges. Position the pattern on the star with the glued end toward the tassel. Repeat this step with the other four points of the star.

17. Paper scallop can be glued to the sides of the star. With a compass, draw a 4 1/2 inch circle on the construction paper. Cut the circle out, fold in half, and cut along the fold line. Fold the half circle in half four more times until you get a very small wedge.

18. Open the paper up, and refold using the fold lines to get accordion pleats, repeat these steps with nine more half circles of the same size. Glue one paper scallop to each wood support on all sides of the star. You may also make scallops using 6 1/2 inch circles. These can be glued between the smaller scallops.



Singkil (seehng-KEEHL)

A Philippine Moro dance where the Moro Prince is save the Princess, it uses four long bamboo poles crossing one another. The spirit and fighting techniques of the Filipino Martial Arts were hidden in many of these native dances because the Spanish authorities banned the practice of these arts.

The dance shows a striking similarity in the footwork, timing and rhythms that of Kali. It takes its name from the bells worn on the ankles of the Muslim princess. Perhaps one of the oldest of truly Filipino dances, the Singkil recounts the epic legend of the "Darangan" of the Maranao people of Mindanao.

This epic, written sometime in the 14th century, tells the fateful story of Princess Gandingan, who was caught in the middle of a forest during an earthquake caused by the diwatas, or fairies of the forest. The crisscrossed bamboo poles represent the trees that were falling, which she gracefully avoids.

Her slave loyally accompanies her throughout her ordeal. Finally, she is saved by the prince. Dancers skillfully manipulate apir, or fans which represent the winds that prove to be auspicious.

Royal princesses to this day in the Sulu Archipelago are required to learn this most difficult and noble dance. There are other versions of Singkil. Perhaps the version more widely performed by dance companies is the "Garden Singkil." The story goes that the princess goes into her garden, accompanied by her slave, and plays with the butterflies, which are represented by the fan dancers. The movements of the fans supposedly represent those of the butterflies, as opposed to the diwatas.



Sakuting (sah-KOOH-teehng)

A northern Philippine Christmas dance of the Ilocano Christians and non-Christians from the province of Abra, it portrays a mock fight using two Arnis sticks 26 to 30 inches long to train for combat. The dance is customarily performed during Christmas at the town plaza, or from house-to-house. When preformed the spectators give the dancers aguinaldos, or gifts of money or refreshments.

The footwork, timing and rhythms of the double stick fighting is used in this entertaining dance.



Komedia

Socio-religious plays depicting the victory of the Christian Spaniards over the Muslim Moors of Africa. The Komedia was created as a disguise for Filipinos to continue the practice of their warrior arts after King Phillip II of Spain outlawed Kali (due to a number of skirmishes against Filipino warriors opposed to Spanish rule). These plays were also used by the Spanish leaders to spread Catholicism throughout the Philippines by showing the superiority of the Christian faith over the native's paganistic beliefs.

In time, more plays emerged for the Spaniards enjoyment. These plays were viewed by the Filipino as a way to practice their worrier arts under the disguise of harmless entertainment.



The FMAdigest wishes all a very Happy New Year. May it be a Healthy, Prosperous, and Productive Year.

Happy New Year to all (English)

Manigong Bagong Taon sa inyong lahat! (Tagalog)

Mabungahong Bag-ong Tuig kaninyong tanan! (Cebuano)

Narang-ay a Baro a Tawen kadakayo amin! (Ilokano)

Mahamungayaon nga Bag-ong Tuig sa inyong tanan (Hiligaynon)

Mamura-way na Ba-gong Taon sa indo gabos! (Bikol)

Masaplalang Bayung Banwa keko ngan! (Kapampangan)

Mainuswagon nga Bag-ong Tuig ha iyo ngatanan! (Waray-Waray)

Maaligwas ya Balon Taon ed sikayon amin! (Pangasinan)

Mahigugmaon nga Bag-ong Dag-on kinyo tanan! (Akeanon)

Makasi Tahun Ba'gu kaniyu katantan! (Tausug)