

## Improved Business Services: Asian Culinary Delights in the “City of Smiles”

by Kathleen Wabrowetz

When Gerardo “Jerry” Tubil started work as a chef at the Royal Am Rei Hotel Bacolod in 2006, he faced major difficulties in running the kitchen. The chef whom he had replaced was no longer around, thus there was nobody to guide him. Only because the main kitchen staff remained was he able to manage the orders, but not at all times to the satisfaction of the management and clients.

Up to the point where he was hired by Royal Am Rei, Jerry never had any formal training or education in the culinary arts. Rather, he made his cooking experience in years of assisting his father who was working for another hotel in Bacolod City. In addition, he ran a little *carenderia*<sup>1</sup> alongside another restaurant job.



He remained formally untrained until Royal Am Rei sent him to the Asian Culinary and Kitchen Management course at the La Consolacion College in Bacolod (LCC-B). This training provided Jerry the opportunity to professionalize his thus far natural cooking skills. On top of improving his cooking performance, he was also able to learn about new areas that allowed him to increase his responsibilities within his job description. He was able to bring food quality and safety standards in the daily operations of the Royal Am Rei’s kitchen, which until that point were lacking. The knowledge he gained on menu planning, specifically in costing and pricing, enabled him to take full charge of this part of kitchen operations after the training. To date, Jerry is responsible for the whole process of kitchen management: from the acceptance of deliveries to storage, to cooking and serving.

Despite the fact that Jerry was the only one formally trained by LCC-B thus far, all of the kitchen staff of 12 was able to benefit as he echoed to them the knowledge he had gained in the training. On a personal note, having contributed to set up an effective management system makes him proud and confident, as well as the feedback from the hotel management and the customers about the improvement of the dishes. He now wishes to learn more about his craft and tries to widen his knowledge. He would like to attend a baking course at the LCC-B to further contribute to the Royal Am Rei by adding a section dessert and pastries to the menu.

The experience which Royal Am Rei made with the LCC-B training resulted in the improved performance of the chef and the kitchen operation in general. This in turn meant an increasing number of guests--now, 80 percent of the available rooms are constantly occupied. Bernadette Junio, the manager of Royal Am Rei, came to know about the offered trainings at LCC-B through Hotel and Restaurant Association of Negros Occidental (HRANO). She decided to send the chef to update his technical knowledge. The hotel industry in Bacolod is very competitive. The Royal Am Rei is a small hotel and thus needs to make special efforts to get market share. It is important to understand the impact that can be made on hotel guests by anticipating their preferences she says explaining the Philippine-Korean compositions added to the menu is in keeping with Royal Am Rei’s status as the most preferred hotel of Korean visitors. Because of the good results, the management decided to send more staff to future LCC trainings. The LCC-B has a good reputation and is recommended by hotels and restaurants which attended their seminars. Our clients are not only from Negros Occidental. They come even from other regions to join our trainings says Dr. Gina Montes, dean of the college.

Indeed, the enhancement of tourism services is even greater cause for joy in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, the City of Smiles.

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*GTZ, the German Government's international development enterprise, has cooperated with the Philippine partners for more than 33 years. We strengthen the capacity of people and institutions to improve the lives of Filipinos in this generation and generations to come. Together we work to balance economic, social and ecological interests through multi-stakeholder dialogue, participation and collaboration.*

A major challenge facing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Visayas is finding suitable skill training programs for their employees and sourcing adequately trained skilled workers from the labor market. As 99 percent of business establishments in the Philippines are classified as MSMEs, this challenge represents a major impediment to high economic growth potential. As such, the GTZ Private Sector Promotion (SMEDSEP), a program implemented by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in cooperation with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) partnered with business development service (BDS)<sup>2</sup> providers in designing programs based on the needs of MSMEs in the sector that had the highest potential in terms of market, income and employment potential.

For Negros Occidental, the tourism sector was seen as the sector that would have the most to gain from such an intervention. It was in this context that the partnership of LCC-B and SMEDSEP came about in 2004, when the GTZ made school visitations to promote the BDS-Program Orientation. Interested schools had to make a letter of intent if they wished to participate in the training module and receive support from the program in terms of business planning, marketing strategy development and product launching. The screening process involved 8 schools, but only two were accepted. One of these schools was the LCC-B.

In a business planning writeshop the participants had to compile an actual business plan incorporating technical, marketing and socio-economic aspects, with particular emphasis on the financial management. Equipped with the output from this workshop, LCC-B was able to develop their first training module on International Culinary and Kitchen Management. After several revisions on the module, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which

spelled out the responsibilities and commitments of the involved parties GTZ, DTI and LCC-B was signed on 16 November 2005.

Because of the partnership with SMEDSEP, LCC-B is now able to offer appropriate tourism related skill training programs like Food and Beverage Product Pricing and Food Service Skills Enhancement. LCC-B became one of the exemplary solutions to the lack of available business development services (BDS) in the gastronomy and tourism sector in Negros Occidental.

*We learnt so much with our partnership. In the first runs of the trainings we had only around 20 participants, but SMEDSEP provided a marketing seminar which helped us a lot in terms of reaching more clients, says Dr. Gina Montes. With LCC-B's success at being a BDS Provider, she obtained the support from the administrators of the college to continue and extend their business development services. Another value-added is that even the profit from the trainings they provide are reinvested in further development for LCC-B teachers, such as providing them with exposure trips around Asia. The demand of the SMEs is high so that LCC-B has a high potential for follow-up trainings, and will thus continue to provide BDS to other tourism-related organizations both in and beyond the region.*



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Private Sector Promotion (SMEDSEP) Program  
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<sup>1</sup> A small eatery, usually outside, serving inexpensive homecooked meals  
<sup>2</sup> BDS are defined as a range of services used by entrepreneurs to help them operate efficiently and grow their businesses with the broader purpose of contributing to economic growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation