

madyo

Issue 2 | December 2008

+ The happy season is here

Filipinos love the Christmas season. Wherever we are in the world, it usually means round the clock get together with family and friends. Meals last for hours and the dusty old Karaoke becomes the ultimate entertainment machine. It is truly a long and joyful period of rest and holiday.

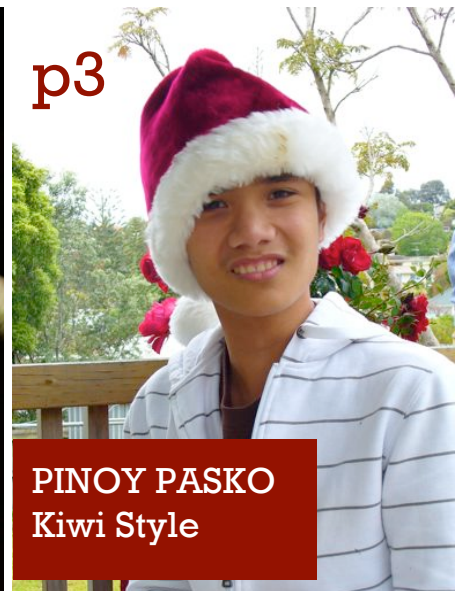
Vina Paredes shares how her Kinoy family celebrates a not-so-snowy Christmas in New Zealand. Andrew Ammundsen recalls his memorable Boracay holiday in the warm climate of the Philippines. Tony Fernando likes it spicy hot and gets adventurous as he searches for Auckland's best cheap eats.

May this month's stories not just inspire, but also make you appreciate life a bit more. Count your blessings, celebrate and be glad. It's hard not to - you are, after all, in Godzone.

Happy holidays, everyone!



HAMILTON
Labour Weekend



PINOY PASKO
Kiwi Style



BORACAY
World famous beach



Miss Philippines New Zealand Winners: (From left) Miss Philippines New Zealand 2008 **Danica Hibdige**, first runner-up **Melanie Maelzer** and second runner-up **Jaline Antinio**

A community celebration in Hamilton **WORDS JEN TAN CHIN-TURINGAN**

Three days of sports, cultural presentations and family activities made the 31st Filipino Labour Weekend an enjoyable event for Filipinos from all over New Zealand.

About 7,500 people participated and attended various activities held in all-in-one venue Mystery Creek, Hamilton.

In addition to traditional events like basketball and Miss New Zealand Philippines, the **Waikato Filipino Association (WFA)**, this year's event organisers, introduced new activities to keep everyone entertained. Popular activities included Salo-Salo Marketplace, and PiNoyZ Got Talent.

Filipino bands **A-D-O Boys** and **Panzit** entertained the crowd with lively music during the day. Parlour games were also organised for families with kids.

First time talent competition

PiNoyZ Got Talent attracted thirteen national entries. Hamilton's violin-piano duet performers **Katrina and Mabel Penamante** shared the grand prize with **Peter Delmiguez**, a crooner from Wellington.

Gino Padilla and **Bacci**, Filipino entertainers from Manila flew in for the Saturday's cultural show and Sunday's coronation ceremony. **Danica Hibdige** from Hamilton was crowned Miss New Zealand Philippines.

In spite of hectic late night activities, Filipinos attended the Sunday's Catholic mass concelebrated by **Monsignor Bennett** and five Filipino Catholic priests from different cities.

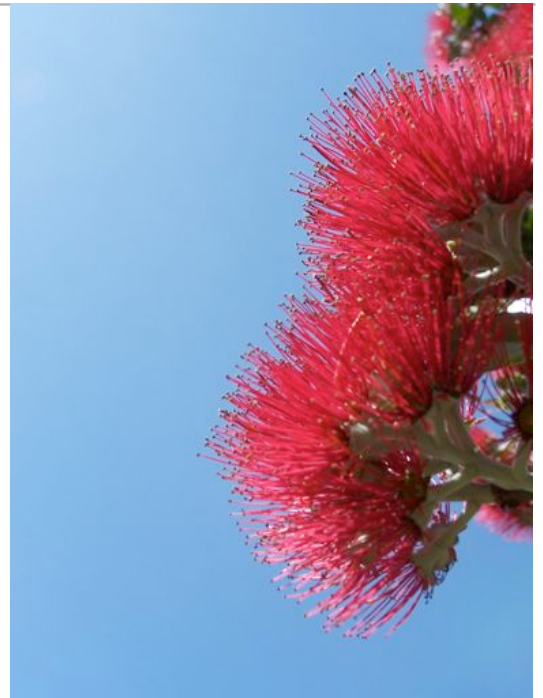
There were nine sports categories. Basketball had the most entries. Darts was reintroduced to answer numerous requests from enthusiasts. Hamiltonian **Mon Esposito** won the singles

category. He also won the doubles category with partner **Romeo Enriquez**. **Zaldy Matic**, from Auckland, was the first and only player to score a rare and prestigious 180.

From being a small gathering of Filipinos 31 years ago in Hamilton, this year's Labour Weekend is the biggest in the Filipino events calendar. WFA chairperson **Jun Valencia** is grateful for the community's support, "Thank you to the organising committee, our sponsors, donors, Federation officers, families, friends and most of all, the NZ-Filipino communities who came and celebrated with us."

Next year's Filipino Labour Weekend reunion will be held in Wellington.

Jen Tan Chin-Turingan is a member of Hamilton's organising committee and WFA Assistant Secretary.



Pohutokawa, barbie & sunblock

A Kiwinoy Christmas means a simple but meaningful celebration in the peak of summer

WORDS DIVINA PAREDES

Before moving to New Zealand, our family did not equate Christmas with summer. In the Philippines, Christmas is celebrated during the coolest time of the year, which provides a perfect backdrop for *Simbang Gabi*, *puto bumbong*, the soft glow of the parol lights, and early evening caroling.

But Christmas in Aotearoa is right in the middle of summer. In fact, a television commercial shows an exhausted Santa Claus on the morning of December 25 heading to the beach for some rest and recreation. Like Santa Claus in this ad, Kiwi families – and the growing number of Filipinos who now call New Zealand home – head to the bach, the beach, a barbie or a picnic to celebrate.

True, the houses and commercial centres will be awash in tinsel and bedecked pine trees. But Mother Nature has a better way of announcing the most special of all seasons – through our very own Christmas tree, the pohutokawa. The pohutokawa's dark olive leaves provide a perfect frame for the riot of scarlet flowers, upstaging the evergreen trees around it.

Photos

Left A Kiwinoy family:
The author, her son **Dino** and husband **Rod**

Right Nature's Christmas tree:
The pohutokawa, with its scarlet flowers, upstages the pine tree

The **Paredes Kiwis** – as my New York-based sister **Dulce** calls me and my siblings **Noel**, **Ralph** and **Jane** who now call New Zealand home – welcome the season in our own way.



Kiwinoy kith and kin: (From left) The author, Lileth Paredes, Jane Paredes, Jane Mendez, Annette Garcia, Tita and Luis Tiongson and Boyet Garcia



Pavlova takes centre stage



Eric Mendez is OIC of the barbie pit



Music is always a part of a Kiwinoy Christmas celebration

Our biggest family gathering is always the Christmas Day lunch. Family, in this occasion, includes our closest friends. This year is special, though, for it marks the first time all four of us are now based in Auckland.

The event is, of course, a barbie and a 'bring a plate' buffet. My brothers **Noel** and **Ralph**, plus friends **Eric Mendez** and **Boyet Garcia**, take charge of the barbie. Each family brings a favourite or signature dish, and the end result is a visual, multicultural feast.

The long wooden table is adorned by vases of flowers (roses and lilies) from our gardens. Kiwi cuisine is represented by the barbeque platter of rosemary and mint marinated lamb chops, honey glazed beef ribs and fresh pork sausages; and roasted kumara salad tossed with capsicum, pesto, cashew nuts, red onion slices and crumbled feta cheese. The centrepiece, of course, is the Pavlova, Jane's specialty. My sister in law **Lileth**, who always brings *kakanins*, made cassava cake with *langka* bits. My sister in law **Atiek**, who is from Indonesia, prepared *bakso*, a noodle soup with beef and squid balls, *sambal* and *kecap manis*. A bowl of fresh

minced chili is on standby for the brave souls who want to further spice up the already fiery broth.


The rest of the day is for eating, singing (with a magic mike or accompanying the strumming of the guitar by **Annette Garcia**), and simply savouring this once a year downtime.

We ring our two other siblings not with us – my brother **Joel** and his family in Manila; and my sister **Dulce** and her family in Westchester, New York.

This revelry is not unlike what we used to have in our house in UP Village, Quezon City, when my mother always prepared a wonderful *Noche Buena* and Christmas lunch for kith and kin. As for gift giving, bringing a potluck dish by itself is a "communal gift". Gifts are reserved for the children.

At the end of the day, my son **Dino** gives me his beatific smile and a hug, his special way of saying

thanks. Dino is autistic, and at the age of 19, is still nonverbal. In 2000, I made the momentous decision to raise this then hyperactive child in New Zealand. Seeing Dino literally bloom in our new home, and develop into a calm and happy young adult, is the best Christmas gift of all.

Christmas is a time for reflection, for thanksgiving, for sharing and for being with people who matter most. Our Kiwinoy Christmas is simple but meaningful, and our family will not have it any other way. 

Divina Paredes is a multi-awarded journalist. She is a recipient of the Qantas Media Award and Fronde Journalist Award. She is currently the editor in chief of CIO Magazine.

At the Asia Down Under 600th Episode Anniversary

- 1 Minister of Ethnic Affairs Pansy Wong
- 2 Asia Down Under Crew led by Melissa Lee (second from left)
- 3 Filipino guests pose with Melissa Lee and MP Pancy Wong (from left) Agnes Granada, Cora Noblejas, Tony Noblejas and Sam Dignadice (far right)
- 4 Asia Down Under's Filipino producer Glenna Casalme with Melissa Lee





postcard perfect holiday

WORDS ANDREW AMMUNDSEN

Growing up in beautiful New Zealand and having stayed in beach resorts in Fiji and Rarotonga, stories of fine sand, stunning sunsets and the most clear blue waters of the South Pacific have always made me curious of Boracay. I wanted to see it for myself. Could it be true? Is Boracay really one of the world's most unforgettable beaches?

This is my holiday story – honest and raw. You will read about the things which non-locals ask when considering a Philippine holiday – How do I get there? Where do I stay? What's the food like? Is it safe?

I hope you will find my experience helpful in planning your very own Boracay experience.

How to get there

Boracay is a tropical island located approximately 315 km south of Manila. We booked our flights online and flew Philippine Airlines (PAL) from Manila to Caticlan. The seats had lots of legroom and the cabin crew wore island-style shirts and Bermuda shorts. The holiday feeling started the minute we got on the plane! We had a great aerial view of Boracay as we came into land in Caticlan, but unfortunately didn't have our camera ready. Darn!

Island Transfer

Rey from Fridays Resort met us at the airport, and drove us to the ferry area. The drive must have been all of 100 meters (only in the Philippines would



you get in a van to travel that short a distance!). When we arrived at the ferry area, there were several small outrigger ferries and one speedboat. We wondered who would be lucky enough to travel high speed on the speedboat. It was us! It took no more than five minutes to cross the channel to Boracay. We had been warned that we would get wet making the ferry transfer, and it was just as well, the warm ocean water splashed and soaked us as we board the boat. Rey drove us from the boat jetty to the resort. The pickup service was great. Rey took care of our bags all the way, and made the multiple transfers really easy.

First Impressions

My first impressions were about the contrast between the beach and the township. The beach is beautiful and picture perfect. The white, powdery sand is stunning. Anyone with a half decent camera could take a shot that

would look like a professional postcard or screen saver.

The township, on the other hand, looked pretty much like any provincial town anywhere in the Philippines. The only difference from other towns I have been to is the narrowness of the main road. At times it was a struggle for our van to squeeze past vehicles coming in the other direction. There was no real sign that the wealth generated by tourism had permeated into the ordinary townsfolk.

“Sand as white and as refined as flour”

Accommodation

We stayed at Fridays, a five-star resort which is at the northern end of White Beach. I can thoroughly recommend Fridays resort. It manages to combine native character with modern comforts.

Being near the end of the beach, there were fewer people around than in the middle of the beach.

The relative quietness suited us fine. We visited in the low season, and we were told that the high season is very different. In the high season (especially around April), thousands of people descend on the beach, and it is one big party. It was somewhat more subdued during our visit. Fridays is famous for its buffet dinner and entertainment on Friday nights. The buffet meal was excellent, with choices to suit all tastes. Local Filipino dancers entertained us. It was truly a very enjoyable evening.

Activities

Boracay seems to be mainly aimed at couples without children, and groups of friends. We didn't see many young children among the tourists.

When we weren't at the resort, we walked along the beach, looked at the shops, and went island hopping. There are lots of holiday and beach related shops – selling shirts, swim wear, massage and even henna tattoos. At night, there

are many live music acts and performances.

After a meal one night, we walked back along the beach, and marveled at the sandcastles that get built every day. Children asking for donations in return for taking photos of the sandcastles also approached us. (The sandcastles all seemed to have a similar design, so we speculated the same family built them all.)



There are lots of adventure activities – parasailing, banana boat rides, fly fishing, all terrain vehicle and mountain bike riding.

Is it affordable?

Despite being a tourist area, we were pleasantly surprised by the prices. We had one hour massages in our room at the resort, and it only cost about NZ\$25 each. Of course we could have had much cheaper massages along the beach, but this seemed really good value from a quality resort. The tourist shops are also good value – we were able to buy reasonably good quality shirts for NZ\$3 each.

The Lows

Boracay is an epitome of a beach paradise. The only thing that threatened to spoil the experience was the incessant chorus of “Sir, ma’am, island hopping”. I swear that we were approached for island hopping about 20 times during a 20-minute walk along the beach.


Here’s a word of warning if you plan to book domestic flights online - be very vigilant. We booked our flights through PAL’s online booking system. We thought the flight schedules were good and the fares very reasonable.

The first shock was getting a credit card bill that was P8,000 higher than what we thought we were paying. We then tried to cancel the booking and arrange new flights. As you can probably imagine, this was anything but easy.

When we got to Manila, we asked the hotel to check which terminal we would be departing from. To our surprise, the flights had been cancelled, and although we had been re-booked on the same days, the flights were at very different times.

Sadly, online transactions in the Philippines are not as quick and as reliable as our systems here.

Last Word

The beach is pristine, the water is warm, the prices are reasonable and everyone’s having a good time. What more can you ask for? Boracay holiday is a definite must-do holiday. 

Andrew is married to Leonor (nee Pantua), a Filipina from South Cotabato. They have two children Kirsty (16 years old) and Cole (2 years old). He is currently Head of Customer Insight for ANZ National Bank.

BULLETIN

BISAYA KA?

Would you like to meet fellow Bisayas in New Zealand?

Join **Katilingbang Bisaya sa New Zealand**, a newly formed not-for-profit organisation which aims to promote and preserve the Visayan language, tradition and culture. Membership is open to all Bisaya speaking Filipinos.

Interested? Email -

katilingbangbisaya@yahoo.co.nz and ask for a membership form.

PLANNING A PARTY?

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\$200.01 – \$1,000	\$25
\$1,000.01 +	\$29

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It's true. Pinoys love to eat. Food is in the centre of everything we do. Every meal is a get-together and a reason to celebrate.

Tony Fernando, a self confessed food aficionado, lets us in on New Zealand's best cheap eats.

Enjoy!



+ BEST CHEAP EATS IN AUCKLAND

**SRI INTAN
LOT 11 945A
NEW NORTH ROAD
AUCKLAND**



Eating out is always an adventure for me. I've learned to be more relaxed when it comes to trying out Asian restaurants. The key is not to expect too much.

Sri Intan is your typical budget Asian restaurant. The store's exteriors and its neighboring shops could be a bit of a turn off to some. But the food is definitely something else.

I'm pleased to report - my first trip to Sri Intan did not disappoint.

The seafood *laksa* comes in a huge bowl that can serve up to three people. The broth is rich and spicy, yet creamy from coconut milk. The noodles are perfectly cooked and the seafood is just right.

“I am now a fan. I have been to this restaurant at least twice a month for the past many months. There were times when I was here every week!”

Any of the stir fry noodles is a ‘must try’ - *Char Kuey Tiao* (flat rice noodles), *Mee Goreng* and *Wantan Hor* (flat rice noodles in white gravy).

My favourite is the Singapore Vermicelli. If you are starving, order this, as it doesn’t take long to prepare. The aroma of an aged and well-used wok is unmistakable. There are generous servings of prawns and fish cake slices. More interestingly, it does not have the curry flavour that is commonly associated with Singapore Vermicelli. According to Janet, the owner, the traditional flavour of Singapore Vermicelli is soy and not curry. The overall effect is just beautiful. I do not miss the curry at all!

The Chicken *Rendang* is delicious. The milder version tastes bland so I strongly suggest that you order it, as the Malays would have it – spicy hot! Their version is thickened by herbs and spices including lemon grass, giving it an interesting zing.

The Lemon Grass chicken is so good that it will put to shame some Vietnamese restaurants around.

For the health buffs, try *Kerabu*, a salad of cucumber, pineapple and mango. Its coconut flavour is surprisingly refreshing.

Malaysian desserts are very similar to our halo-halo. They have so many versions compared to ours. A treat especially during summer!

On occasion, Janet might offer you a free Malaysian tea called *Teh Tarik* which is quite delightful in a cold winter day.

Mention my name and she might offer you a cup of Malaysian tea.

As a budget restaurant, many of the dishes are below \$10. The appetizers are \$5.50 each. For food court prices, you get restaurant quality food. For less than \$15 per person, you can be in Penang for lunch or dinner.

Sri Intan is definitely one of my favourite best cheap eats in Auckland. Be prepared to be surprised! ☺

Dr Tony Fernando is a sleep psychiatrist and a lecturer at the University of Auckland’s Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Tony’s fave starters

- Lobak** Think of it as a mini meat roll wrapped in a crunchy paper thin wrapper. It goes well with the catsupy dipping sauce.
- Tofu Bakar** This may sound a bit exotic. It’s like a crispy tofu sandwich. After trying one, I ended up eating three!
- Po Piah** A healthier version of Tofu Bakar. Veggies and herbs are wrapped in a paper thin lumpia wrapper, with tangy brown sauce drizzled on top.
- Chicken Pandan** Delicately packed flavoured chicken morsels wrapped in Pandanus leaves and deep fried.



Watch this space for **“masarap na, mura pa!”** restaurants & eateries.

+ Barangay Pinoy Out & About in NZ



Newly elected CAPO officers: (From left) Treasurer Cora Noblejas, Secretary Zenie Low, President Tony Noblejas and Vice President Gene Underwood



Honorable Consul Emilie Shie and Tony Noblejas pose with AKL Pinoy members



Cecille Arada Greenop attends National's Victory Party at Sky City



Auckland's PBA over 40 years old basketball team wins the championship at this year's Filipino Labour Weekend



The UP Alumni NZ in Auckland celebrates their Christmas party at the Windy Ridge School Hall (North Shore)

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