

Population Facts

- More than 3 million Americans are of Philippine descent.¹
- Filipino immigrants make up more than four percent of the immigrant population in the U.S.¹
- More Filipinos live in California than any other state.¹
- Hawaii, New York, New Jersey and Texas are the other top states for Filipino settlers.¹
- Median household income for Filipino immigrants is \$82,000.¹
- Approximately seven percent of Filipino immigrants live at or below the poverty line.¹

FACT SHEET

FILIPINO FOOD AND CULTURE

Traditional Foods and Dishes

The food and culture of the Philippines are largely influenced by Spanish, Chinese and American traditions.² White rice is the main food in the diet and it is usually served three times per day. Fish is the primary protein source in the diet.²

Vinegar, soy sauce, salt, fish sauce and fermented fish are traditional flavorings used in Filipino cuisine.³ Philippine adobo is often dubbed the national dish, but varies from the adobo served in other cultures.⁴ In the Philippines, adobo refers to foods stewed in a broth of garlic, vinegar, bay leaf and peppercorns and is made with chicken, pork or both.⁴

Holidays and Special Occasions

More than 80 percent of Filipinos identify as Catholic, with almost 12 percent identifying as another Christian denomination.⁵ Food is often the center point of celebrations and the Philippines are known for a long Christmas season. Food choices for the holidays vary by island and family economics, however, cocido (meat, sausage, salt pork and ham with cabbage and beans) is considered a more elaborate and expensive meal suitable for Christmas.⁴ Tinubong (rice cake cooked in a bamboo tube) is a common Christmas treat or dessert.⁴

Traditional Eating Patterns

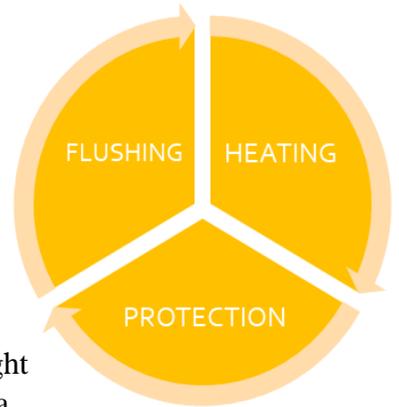
Fresh fish is often caught daily and many families have gardens.³ Traditionally, a clay pot is used for steaming rice and stewing other foods.⁶ A kalawi (similar to a wok) is commonly used for sautéing. Courses of a meal may be served consecutively, if Spanish in origin, or simultaneously, including dessert, if the dish is of Philippine origin.⁶ Generally, the eldest male starts the meal, and others follow. Because soups, stews and mixed dishes are common, forks and spoons are frequently used, but knives may not be present on the table.⁶ Typically, three meals and two snacks, one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon, are eaten daily.^{3,6}

What's on the menu?

- Agahan (breakfast) is often rice fried with garlic and eggs or broiled fish served with coffee or hot chocolate.⁶
- Tanghalian (lunch) and hapunan (dinner) are larger meals including rice, noodles, and possibly an adobo (stew) or sinigan (pork with fruit and vegetables in a sour broth).⁴ Fruit often concludes the meal.⁶
- Meriendas (snacks) are at times more like smaller meals and may consist of arozo coldo⁴ (chicken with rice gruel and ginger), kinilaw² (raw fish with ginger) or ensaimadas (sweet rolls).⁴

Traditional Health Beliefs

Flushing, heating and protection are the key elements to traditional health beliefs.⁷ Flushing rids the body of debris, heating regulates the internal temperature and protection involves safeguarding the body from natural and supernatural forces.⁷ Being overweight is thought of as such protection and a layer of fat on the body denotes resistance.⁸



Filipinos will use home remedies and herbal medicine first.⁷ These may include drinking boiled ginger for a sore throat and boiling corn hair in water and drinking it to promote urination. A hilot, is a traditional practitioner sought for pain relief, and offers treatment along the lines of chiropractic and massage.⁷ Filipinos will seek the advice of a traditional healer or family elder prior to that of a physician and usually only seek a doctor when the illness has advanced and home remedies have failed.⁷

Current Food Practices

Rice and fish are still the staple foods in the Philippines² Despite the availability of fortified rice and iodized salt, micronutrient deficiencies persist. Anemia, hypothyroidism and osteoporosis are prevalent.² In urban areas, more foods are available, including some American-style fast food and convenience foods, like cereals, and obesity is on the rise.²

First generation Filipino-Americans see themselves as more Filipino than American.³ However, most report enjoying American food just as well as traditional Filipino food and consume them equally. While the use of butter as a spread is still uncommon, bakery foods, cereals and waffles are commonly consumed, in addition to traditional white rice.³ Dairy products are more affordable in the U.S. and have been embraced, as have processed meats.³ Due to increased availability, Filipino-Americans eat a better variety of vegetables, but rarely eat them raw.³ Additionally, fast food consumption and increased portions of calorie dense foods are associated with Filipino dietary acculturation.⁹

References

1. McNamara K, Batalova J. Filipino immigrants in the United States. *Migration Information Source*. 2016.
2. Grieger JA, Haas JD, Murray-Kolb LE, Kris-Etherton P, Beard JL. Nutrient adequacy and food group consumption of Filipino novices and religious sisters over a nine month period. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr*. 2008;17:566.
3. dela Cruz FA, Lao BT, Heinlein C. Level of acculturation, food intake, dietary changes, and health status of first-generation Filipino Americans in Southern California. *J Am Assoc Nurse Pract*. 2013;25:619-630.
4. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett B, Fernandez DG. Culture ingested: on the indigenization of philippine food. *Gastronomica*. 2003;3:58-71.
5. Philippines International Religious Freedom Report. U.S. Department of State Web Site. <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2004/35425.htm>. Published 2004. Accessed October 1, 2017.
6. Philippines. Adoption Nutrition Web Site. <http://adoptionnutrition.org/nutrition-by-country/philippines/>. Accessed October 1, 2017.
7. Ordonez RV, Gandeza N. Integrating traditional beliefs and modern medicine: Filipino nurses' health beliefs, behaviors, and practices. *Home Health Care Manag Pract*. 2004;17:22-27.
8. Lynn L, Farrales, Gwen E, Chapman. Filipino women living in Canada: constructing meanings of body, food and health. *Health Care Women Int*. 1999;20:179-194.
9. Vargas P, Jurado L. Dietary Acculturation among Filipino Americans. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2016;2015;13:1-1.