



(Clockwise from left) Table setting at La Cocina de Tita Moning, with antique china and silverware; Slowly Roasted Lamb Shank on Mashed Potatoes; Fresh Papaya Salad with Jamon Serrano, carabao cheese, basil, and Honey Calamansi Vinaigrette

By RESERVATION ONLY

FIVE PLACES WHERE "EATING OUT" BECOMES A UNIQUE DINING EXPERIENCE

There is more to a meal than the food. The ambience, table settings, food presentation, the company, and décor all add to the experience. The people behind these dining establishments offer something truly unique—meals are set and served in private homes. Given that, none of them accept walk-in customers—reservations are required. Come visit, and let them give you a meal to remember.

La Cocina de Tita Moning in Manila

"I started selling my grandmother's recipes from her kitchen," said Suzette L. Montinola, the chef and granddaughter of Tita Moning. "Then people who bought the dishes asked if they could eat them in the house." The "house" is the Legarda ancestral home where Suzette's grandparents Dr. Alejandro Roces Legarda and his wife Ramona Hernandez (*Tita Moning*) lived and raised their children. Using the heirloom recipes, Suzette and her family created a dining experience that includes the meal served with antique china, glassware, and silverware, and a tour of the house.

Ambience/décor: The Legarda house, built in 1937, is one of the first Art Deco houses in Manila. All around are antique pieces, furniture, and works of Filipino National Artists.

Cuisine: Spanish-Filipino, using family heirloom recipes
Specialties: Whole-Baked *Lapu-Lapu*, Tita Moning's Famous *Lengua* Cooked in White Wine, Paella Valenciana, Bread and Butter Pudding
Menu: Depending on the menu, meals consist of six to seven courses, and La Cocina de Tita Moning has its own wine list
Capacity: Can accommodate groups as small as two to as large as 10
Price: P1,500 per head, with 10% service charge and 12% VAT

Corkage fee: P300 per 750ml bottle
Details to note: Accepts reservations for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Many of their homemade specialties are also for sale. For birthday parties, they can provide a complementary cake if advised in advance





A pretty centerpiece during one of Annabelle Yuchengco's lunches. (Below) A course from Annabelle Yuchengco's *kaiseki* menu



Annabelle Yuchengco in Alabang

For businesswoman Annabelle “Bella” Yuchengco, the best times to eat are with close friends—and it was during those instances when the idea of catering meals to the public at her home came about. “My friends would eat in the house, then ask if they could bring their friends over to sample my food,” she recalled. She started out serving Chinese lauriats. “I felt that there was really no one doing Chinese or Japanese in their homes. Others usually offer Continental or French dishes.” Three years ago she decided to add a Japanese *kaiseki* menu after trying many *kaiseki* dinners.

Ambience/décor: Depending on the menu, Bella uses authentic Chinese or Japanese décor for her place settings, such as lacquer placemats and Imari porcelain plates for her Japanese dishes. Since dining is in her home, the atmosphere is relaxed

Cuisine: Japanese *kaiseki* and Chinese lauriat

Specialties: From her Chinese menu: Chinese spaghetti, Noodles with Glazed Pork Belly, Sharksfin Soup. From her Japanese menu: Fried Milk with Kani, Tamago Dofu with Pumpkin Purée, and Avocado Mousse

Menu: For her Chinese dishes, usually eight courses; for Japanese, eight to 12 courses

Capacity: Minimum 12 pax, maximum 14 pax

Price: P1,600-1,900 per head

Corkage fee: No corkage fee

Details to note: Accepts reservations for lunch and dinner at least two weeks before. Softdrinks, coffee, and tea are included in the meal

My Mother's Garden in Pasay City

This dining sanctuary is the brainchild of fashion designers Malu Antonio Veloso and her daughter Letlet, located in the family home designed by Malu's father, National Artist Pablo S. Antonio. “When my mother passed away, my brothers were thinking of selling this house,” Malu said. “It was such a pity, it being the house of a National Artist.” She decided to open it to the public for meals, and also as a tribute to her mother Doña Marina, who often relaxed in the dining area amidst her garden.

Ambience/décor: The house was built in the 1940s, with a lot of Art Deco touches and Pablo S. Antonio's noted clean, structural aesthetic. Its jungle-like garden, with rattan furniture, natural lighting, and even vintage ceiling fans add to the homey feel

Cuisine: Varied—there are many Filipino and Italian dishes. Malu is particular about her ingredients—they must be as fresh as possible

Specialties: Mustard Chicken, Mango Squares, Pomodoro/Pesto pasta, fresh fruit juices

Menu: Meals are served buffet-style, with about five to six viands, and drinks

Capacity: The house can accommodate up to 25 people

Price: P700-800 per head; for couples, P1,000 per head

Corkage fee: No corkage fee; if requested, they can provide wine that is charged by the bottle



Airy dining room that opens out into a garden in My Mother's Garden

Details to note: Accepts reservations for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Aside from the main dining area, there is also a private air-conditioned room. Paintings by contemporary artists, select desserts (such as Malu's Mango Squares), and orchid arrangements are also for sale

Bale Dutung in Pampanga

For chef, artist, author, and food and travel columnist for *The Philippine Star* Claude Tayag and his wife Mary Ann, their home Bale Dutung was often the venue of many meals with family and friends. “We never intentionally planned to ‘create’ such an establishment,” Claude said. The idea of offering lunch to the public came from the late *Philippine Daily Inquirer* columnist Doreen Fernandez, who had enjoyed a meal in Bale Dutung and wrote about it. “She suggested we offer lunch to other ‘kindred spirits.’ We heeded her advice and there was no turning back.”

Ambience/décor: Homey and rustic Filipino; décor includes various woodworks and paintings by Claude and his collection of antique Philippine kitchen utensils and implements

Cuisine: Traditional Pampango cuisine served artistically
Specialties: Kapampangan sushi (*talangkâ* sushi and *burong hipon*/mustard leaf roll), Duck *Inasal* Confit, Five-Ways *Lechon* (crispy skin, grilled *lechon* ribs with grilled eggplant boat, fried shredded lechon on soft tortilla wrap, *sinigang na lechon*, *asadong lechon pata*)

Menu: Eight to 10 dishes including dessert, along with drinks (soft drinks, beer, *buko* and *dalandan* juice if in season)

Capacity: Minimum 12 pax, maximum 18 pax for sit-down meals; minimum 18 pax, maximum 50 pax for buffet

Price: P1,500 per head

Corkage fee: No corkage fee



The charming and native Filipino settings at Bale Dutung

Details to note: Accepts reservations for lunch. Bale Dutung is a non-smoking establishment. Only paying guests are allowed inside the premises; there is a waiting area for drivers, helpers, and bodyguards



Pretty and rustic table settings at Rohini's

Rohini's in Alfonso, Cavite

For partners Soly Borromeo and Roceli Valencia, the decision to put up Rohini's came out of necessity. “We’re vegetarian, and there are very few vegetarian restaurants,” Soly said. Both experimented with favorite recipes and gave them a vegetarian twist, such as using gluten or tofu as meat substitutes. Eventually, their vegetarian friends would bring over non-vegetarians to try the food. “Making these dishes taste familiar to non-vegetarians is the challenge.”

Ambience/décor: Described as “a hut in the middle of an unstructured garden,” the vibe is very casual and rustic

Cuisine: International with a lacto-vegetarian twist. They serve several set menus of favorite dishes from various cuisines—Filipino, Spanish, Chinese, Mexican, and Italian.

Specialties: *Kare-kare* and *adobo* (using unripe jackfruit) from the Filipino menu, and dimsum from the Chinese menu

Menu: Meals consist of eight courses

Capacity: Maximum of 15 pax

Price: P600 per head on average

Details to note: Rohini's is only open for lunch on the weekends. As the partners are Hindu, they also do not allow liquor on the premises ■

Address Book

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Kapampangan sushi by Bale Dutung