



PROCEEDINGS 2026-25

Local Regional Studies Network

Namit Gid!: A Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Ilonggo's Batchoy

***Food Safety and Packaging Training for Batchoy Establishment
Representatives and Stakeholders' Workshop: Opportunities
for Collaborations***

21-22 October 2025

8th Floor, Iloilo City Hall, Iloilo City

Paolo Gequiñana, Frances Anthea R. Redison, and Aprille Danilly Guintibano



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
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Project 2: *Namit Gid!*

A Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Ilonggo's *Batchoy*

18 June 2025

Office of Initiatives in Culture and the Arts (OICA) Conference Room
University of the Philippines Visayas, Iloilo City

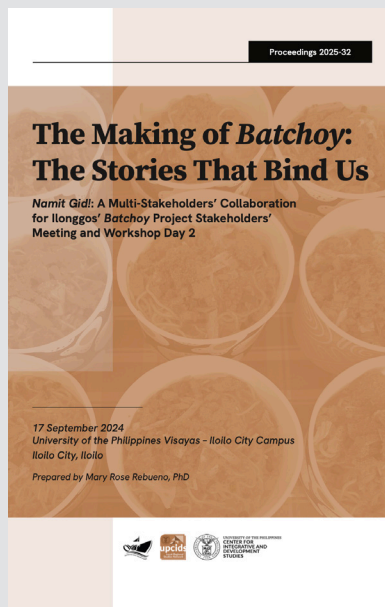
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Namit Gid!: A Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Ilonggo's *Batchoy*



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The Making of *Batchoy*: The Stories That Bind Us

Namit Gid!: A Multi-Stakeholders' Collaboration for Ilonggos' *Batchoy* Project Stakeholders' Meeting and Workshop Day 2

17 September 2024
University of the Philippines Visayas – Iloilo City Campus
Iloilo City, Iloilo

Prepared by Mary Rose Rebueno, PhD



PROCEEDINGS

The Making of *Batchoy*:
The Stories That Bind Us

DAY 1

Food Safety and Packaging Training for *Batchoy* Establishment Representatives

The University of the Philippines Visayas Center for West Visayan Studies (UPV-CWVS) team for Project 2: *Namit Gid!*: A Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Ilonggo's *Batchoy* facilitated the Food Safety and Packaging Training for *Batchoy* Establishment Representatives held on October 21, 2025. This capacity-building initiative is led by the Iloilo City government as part of their mandate as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. She emphasized that this activity is part of the three-year project for collaboration aimed at supporting Iloilo City's efforts to maintain its designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

The training is comprised of representatives from various sectors:

Iloilo City Government

1. **Arch. Wilfredo Sy Jr.**
Committee on Cultural Heritage and Conservation
2. **Ms. Leny Ledesma**
Iloilo City Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions
3. **Atty. Theinhart G. Pahila**
Iloilo City Mayor's Office

Batchoy establishment Owners/Representatives

1. **Ms. Marichel Magalona**
Deco's Original La Paz *Batchoy*
2. **Ms. Eva Esposado**
Ted's Oldtimer La Paz *Batchoy*
3. **Ms. Arlyn Kilayko**
Netong's Original Special La Paz *Batchoy*
4. **Ms. Lira Montero**
Alicia's *Batchoy*

5. Mr. Jeffrey Selerio

Alicia's Batchoy

6. Mr. Janrhy Sta. Ana

Alicia's Batchoy

UPV Food Safety Team**1. Dr. Johannes Magpusao**

Dean, School of Technology

2. Asst. Prof. Emeliza C. Lozada

Retired/Former Dean, School of Technology

3. Mr. Jose Marie Eslopör

University Extension Specialist I, Regional Research Center

4. Dr. Jade Pahila

University Researcher I, Regional Research Center

5. Asst. Prof. Lumen Tejano

Institute of Fish Processing Technology

UPV-CWVS Team**1. Asst. Prof. Frances Anthea Redison**

Program Leader and CWVS Director

2. Dr. Mary Rose Rebueno

Batchoy Project Leader

3. Mr. Sashah Dioso

Paper Writer and CWVS University Research Associate

4. Ms. Febrey Esclares

Senior Office Assistant

5. Ms. Aprille Danilly Guintibano

Junior Administrative Aide

The goal of the activity was providing and assessing existing food safety practices of the *batchoy* establishments and create a food safety manual specific for the *batchoy*.

Overview of the Project

Asst. Prof. Redison, Director of the UPV-CWVS and Program Leader of Project 2 commenced the program by acknowledging everyone's presence and introducing the Center for West Visayan Studies and its funding agency for the project, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies–Local Regional Studies Network (UP CIDS LRSN). She then proceeded to introduce the participants of the training from the Iloilo City government for the consistent support and initiative in this project to tap the UPV-CWVS for resource persons to work with the *batchoy* establishments, *batchoy* establishment representatives and owners, and members of the UPV Food Safety Team. She also introduced the members of the UPV-CWVS Project 1 Team. She provided a comprehensive overview of the project to establish a clear direction for the day's training.

She also acknowledged the Iloilo City government's efforts to collaborate by revisiting the significant activities conducted and accomplishments achieved during Phase 1 of the project, emphasizing their relevance to the project's overall goal. The first year of the project focused on establishing the rationale behind the project. The project has two goals. The first, which is considered the main goal, is to support the Iloilo City government in maintaining its UNESCO designation as Creative City of Gastronomy. This can be accomplished by helping the government develop and lobby relevant policies and implement activities that will strengthen the city's identity and the *batchoy* industry that represents its culinary heritage. The second is to extend the UPV-CWVS services to the local government by offering technical support in their capacity-building activities to the *batchoy* business community with *batchoy* selected as the focus because of its deep cultural ties to Ilonggo heritage. She noted that while the collaboration will concentrate solely on *batchoy* for now, it serves as a foundation for future initiatives. She then moved on to discuss Phase 2, describing the objectives, activities conducted, and future actions all of which are intended to guide the project's continued development and ensure the participants' understanding of this undertaking.

Activities conducted during Phase 1 were signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Iloilo City government, formation of a *batchoy* core team, and stakeholders' meetings that identified key issues related to *batchoy*. These discussions laid the groundwork for the publication of two policy briefs authored by Dr. Mary Rose Rebuena and disseminated by the UP CIDS which are available on their website. For the second year, recent activities included stakeholder dialogues and preparations for the two-day training-workshop. The first day is the collaboration of the Iloilo City government

and UP Visayas with an invitation for the UPV Food Safety Team as resource speaker, whose role is to assess existing kitchen practices and co-develop food safety guidelines specific to *batchoy* through a participatory and consultative approach. The second day focuses on the strategic promotion of *batchoy* through ports, discussions on forming an association of *batchoy* establishments, and exploring the possibility of applying for a geographic indication.



Figure 1. Participants and resource persons of Food Safety and Packaging Training pose for a group photo. The training was held on October 21, 2025 at Iloilo City Hall. The activity was spearheaded by the Iloilo City government in partnership with the UPV-CWVS



Figure 2. Asst. Prof. Redison, Director of the UPV CWVS welcomed the participants and provided an overview of the project

Resource Speakers for the Training

Within the context of Iloilo as a culinary hot spot and its UNESCO designation, Asst. Prof. Redison underscored the importance of strengthening food safety practices particularly where street food and small-scale food establishments provide affordable, accessible, and delicious food to urban residents that are often associated with poor environmental sanitation, inadequate infrastructure, and improper food handling that increase the food contamination and food borne diseases. The Iloilo City government has taken the initiative to tap the UPV-CWVS to help them with the training and the UPV-CWVS has provided the resource persons from the UPV Food Safety Team to work with the *batchoy* establishments.

The UPV Food Safety Team has recently developed a manual tailored for karinderyas, street food vendors, and micro- small, and medium enterprises (MSME) food handlers. With their assistance through a collaborative partnership and participatory approach that focus not only on numbers of training conducted but on analyzing and improving actual food safety practices, they can help *batchoy* restaurants examine ingredient handling, preparation methods, and possible sources of contamination, and to co-develop *batchoy*-specific food safety guidelines to minimize risks of contamination through improved hygienic practices. Their assistance in the training demonstrates the project's commitment to strengthening food safety across Iloilo's food industry.



Figure 3. The UPV Food Safety Team was tapped to conduct the training for *batchoy* establishment representatives

Before the start of the activity, Asst. Prof. Redison introduced the UPV Food Safety Team composed of the following members:

- Dr. Johannes Magpusao, Dean of UPV School of Technology
- Asst. Prof. Emeliza C. Lozada, Retired/Former Dean of UPV School of Technology
- Mr. Jose Marie Eslopator, University Extension Specialist I of the UPV Regional Research Center
- Dr. Jade Pahila, University Researcher I of the UPV Regional Research Center
- Asst. Prof. Lumen Tejano, UPV Institute of Fish Processing Technology

Training on Food Hazard and Food Safety

Dr. Johannes Magpusao

Dr. Johannes Magpusao started the training by highlighting to the participants that their recent food safety training session focused on streetfoods and karinderya operations. She hoped that participants will be able to gain insights from the activity and that the outcomes would contribute to the formulation of policy-specific initiatives targeting the *batchoy* sector.

To give the resource speakers a sense of how long each establishment has been serving *batchoy* to Ilonggos, the participants were asked about their years in the business. Netong's Original Special La Paz *Batchoy* has been operating for 71 years, while Deco's Original La Paz *Batchoy* dates back to 1938, though the representative present in the training began working there only in 2019. Ted's Oldtimer La Paz *Batchoy* has been around since 1945, and Alicia's *Batchoy* is the newest among them, having started in 2018.

Participants said that they had previously undergone food safety training. Dr. Johannes Magpusao explained that food safety training is expected from medium and small food companies and this should be conducted annually as a refresher course to remind food handlers of their responsibilities in the entire process of food making. To provide a clear understanding of food safety risks in business establishments, she discussed the fundamental principles of food safety emphasizing its primary objective which is to prevent mortality. She also presented the importance of practicing food safety in the workplace and the potential dangers that might happen if *batchoy* owners neglect these measures.



Figure 4. Dr. Johannes Magpusao of the UPV Food Safety Team led the discussion for the Food Safety and packaging Training

Dr. Magpusao first focused on the three potential types of food hazards that can be present in food businesses. These are the physical, chemical, and biological hazards. Dr. Magpusao provided common examples of these hazards in detail, offering clear and common examples of these hazards that may be found in the workplace. She also elaborated on how these hazards affect business operations such as product quality, feedback to the business in general, and most importantly the health and safety concerns of consumers. In addition, she provided practical measures to prevent the occurrence of hazards, emphasizing sanitary practices and responsible handling of the products, supplies, and equipment.

The second topic discussed the various points where food hazards can occur throughout the entire process of kitchen operations starting from the handling of raw ingredients to food preparation, cooking, and even consumption. She explained how the quality and safety of food products can be affected by several factors at each stage such as during input supply, food transportation, storage conditions, preparation methods, packaging, and cooking. She highlighted the importance of maintaining strict oversight throughout the process to effectively reduce potential risks by presenting examples that take place in the kitchen.

The third topic explored the key steps necessary to ensure food safety in establishments after identifying the hazards. Dr. Magpusao highlighted four essential steps. First, food handlers must ensure that they practice proper hand washing and products must be cleaned thoroughly. Second, raw and cooked products must be kept separated to avoid cross contamination. Third, food materials should undergo proper storage methods, whether by chilling or freezing, to avoid spoilage and bacteria growth. Lastly, food should be

cooked thoroughly and at the appropriate temperatures to kill pathogens and microorganisms.

Discussions and Data Gathering

Representatives from *batchoy* establishments raised questions and clarifications on identification of bacteria present in the kitchen, as well as how the formulation and level of ingredients put into the product affect the food safety and quality of *batchoy*. The team members were able to explain using scientific references and evidence-based scenarios to the participants.

For the output of the participants, Asst. Prof. Lozada requested the participants to come up with a flow diagram of the steps that *batchoy* undergoes. Based on this diagram, participants were then tasked by Dr. Magpusao with conducting a hazard assessment as a first step to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP). The HACCP approach used in food safety management to identify, evaluate, and control hazards that could compromise the food safety. In addition to performing the hazard assessment, participants were asked to identify and document other food safety concerns encountered in their workplace, providing a more comprehensive understanding of potential risks.

Throughout the workshop, team members actively supported the participants, offering guidance and clarification as needed. The data and insights gathered from these activities will subsequently be compiled and analyzed by the team to produce a food safety manual specifically tailored for the preparation and handling of *batchoy*, ensuring that the guidelines are both practical and contextually relevant to the participants' operational environment.



Figure 5. *Batchoy* establishment participants listened attentively to the resource speakers

DAY 2

Stakeholders' Workshop: Opportunities for Collaboration

The second day of the activity was the Stakeholders' Workshop: Opportunities for Collaborations, held on October 22, 2025. This activity focused on strengthening cooperation and formulating policies for the growth of the local *batchoy* industry organized by the UPV-CWVS. This activity aimed to: 1) provide recommendations on how to promote *batchoy*'s presence at the Iloilo International Airport and city seaports and 2) form a *batchoy* association to formalize industry collaboration as a prerequisite to applying for a Geographical Indication (GI) for "La Paz *Batchoy*".

The Stakeholders' Workshop was attended by the following representatives:

Iloilo City Government

1. **Arch. Wilfredo Sy Jr.**
Committee on Cultural Heritage and Conservation
2. **Ms. Christine O. Octoso**
Iloilo City Committee on Cultural Heritage and Conservation
3. **Ms. Leny Ledesma**
Iloilo City Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions
4. **Atty. Reinhart G. Pahila**
Iloilo City Mayor's Office
5. **Ms. Ma. Lucy M. Sinay**
Iloilo City Public Information Office
6. **Ms. Jennifer Christie P. Avenir**
City Health Office
7. **Atty. Sharon Milan**
Consultant of Iloilo City Government

Government Agency

1. **Ms. Khariza Joy Sofia**
Department of Tourism Region VI

Batchoy Establishment Owners/Representatives

- 1. Ms. Marichel Magalona**
Deco's Original La Paz *Batchoy*
- 2. Ms. Dolores Espinosa**
Ted's Oldtimer La Paz *Batchoy*
- 3. Mr. Patrick Guillergan**
Netong's Original Special La Paz *Batchoy*

UPV-CWVS Team

- 1. Asst. Prof. Frances Anthea Redison**
Program Leader and CWVS Director
- 2. Dr. Mary Rose Rebueno**
Batchoy Project Leader
- 3. Mr. Sashah Dioso**
Paper Writer and CWVS University Research Associate
- 4. Ms. Febrey Esclares**
Senior Office Assistant

Asst. Prof. Redison highlighted that the collaboration among stakeholders is vital in sustaining Iloilo's culinary heritage. She provided an overview of the project and activities previously conducted. She also discussed the second phase of the project, which involves engaging with the city government through a memorandum of agreement. The main agenda was to support sustainable efforts to maintain the Iloilo City's designation as UNESCO City of Gastronomy, with a focus on heritage preservation and tourism. Among the activities conducted by the UP CIDS were identification and documentation of issues through interviews and stakeholder meetings. She also presented the project overview with discussions on two main topics for the workshop:

1. Promoting *batchoy*'s presence at the Iloilo International Airport and city seaports; and
2. Forming a *batchoy* association to formalize industry collaboration as a prerequisite to applying for a Geographical Indication (GI) for "La Paz *Batchoy*"



Figure 6. The Stakeholders' Meeting was organized by the UPV-CWVS in partnership with the Iloilo City government. This was attended by *batchoy* owners, government agencies and city LGU representatives



Use of Ports — Enhancing *Batchoy* Presence

For *batchoy* owners, Iloilo has steadily emerged as a prominent destination for the filming of movies and television series, as well as serving as a venue for international conferences, competitions, events, and festivals among others. In 2023, Iloilo City was named a Creative City of Gastronomy by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with *batchoy* as the dish that brought this recognition to Iloilo City, according to Ms. Magalona. Asst. Prof. Redison pointed out that this title showcasing its cultural heritage and culinary gastronomy has received considerable attention from both domestic and international tourists leading to a significant number of tourist arrivals and contribution to the local economy, as pointed out by the

participants. In response, the Ilonggo community led by the local government unit (LGU) has strengthened their effort in promoting the city's cultural and culinary heritage to the global audience. The first agenda of the workshop was identifying the existing issues and concerns on the lack of visibility of *batchoy* in ports and strengthening its promotion and presence at the Iloilo International Airport and major seaports, to promote Ilonggo's iconic dish soup through these areas and establish concrete actions to promote *batchoy* as a representation of Iloilo's rich culinary heritage.

Issues and Challenges in Ports

According to Ilonggo *batchoy* business owners and industry stakeholders, many airports have transformed their spaces to feature and highlight the signature products of their host cities, providing both local and international travelers with an opportunity to experience and appreciate their local culture. This trend is evident in airports across the country such as those in Cebu, which highlights their renowned lechon and in Aklan, where the region's pinya products are prominently showcased. This can promote the businesses and help various stakeholders. However, this is not the case for Iloilo International Airport, more so the presence of *batchoy*. It was noted that although *batchoy* was once available at the airport, the establishment serving it has since closed. Participants expressed a shared sentiment that the Ilonggo soup dish is notably absent from both Iloilo International Airport and local seaports.

The inclusion of *batchoy* in port areas would enhance its promotional and marketing strategy. However, concerns have been raised regarding potential conflicts between the city and provincial governments on the use of ports over product promotion, given that the airport is situated within the provincial area, while the seaport lies both within the city and provincial area.

Arch. Sy expressed concern that the municipality of Cabatuan, where the airport is situated, might not agree with the proposal since they also have their own local products to promote. He also noted that the final decision on the matter will be decided by the provincial government. Ms. Avenir of the City Health Office emphasized that establishing the business at the airport would help boost the provincial economy, as the province is the one that collects the taxes in this area. For *batchoy* business owners and representatives, it embodies the entire province of Iloilo, with the Ilonggos acknowledged as the stewards of *batchoy* heritage. Asst. Prof. Redison concurred with this perspective, emphasizing the importance of *batchoy* that is rooted in its cultural ties to the

Ilonggo community, rather than its association with a specific geographical space. Additionally, participants suggested that other local products from Iloilo should also be showcased in these areas, as this would support the thriving local industry, not just *batchoy*.

To effectively address the absence of *batchoy* stalls at the ports, it is crucial to consider the allocation of appropriate spaces where such establishments can operate and serve the dish to domestic and international travelers. According to Atty. Pahila, despite the presence of seaports in Iloilo City, there is a need for the city government to coordinate with the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) which is under the national government. With the ongoing expansion of the Iloilo International Airport managed by the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), facilitated through a public-private partnership with Prime Asset Ventures Inc. (PAVI) of the Villar Group as the original proponent, the primary challenge now lies in the establishment of *batchoy* concessionaires in the airport through the management which oversees the implementation of airport policies on rentals and tenants. The issues and recommendations will not be addressed unless reinforced by the national government to the CAAP and PPA.

Batchoy owners and their representatives have already taken steps to address this issue by reaching out to the CAAP in Iloilo. However, despite their inquiries, they have yet to receive a response. One potential reason pointed out for the lack of access to space or stalls is the logistical challenge posed by the nature of *batchoy* preparation. It is not just food – its on-site cooking is also a cultural experience. This tradition ensures that food is served with its authentic flavor and shows the customers that their food is prepared following sanitary practices. Since *batchoy* requires on-site preparation, there may be concerns regarding port regulations that need to be addressed such as compliance to the safety protocols and legal requirements, well-established operational procedures, and efficient infrastructure to integrate the presence of different *batchoy* establishments into the planned expansion of airport facilities.

Communication and coordination with various stakeholders such as local government units, national government agencies, private organizations, and civil groups are necessary to address these concerns.



Figure 8. Atty. Pahila (left) and Arch. Wilfredo Sy Jr. attended as representatives of the Iloilo City government



Figure 9. (L to R) *Batchoy* representatives from Ted's, Deco's, and Netong's provided relevant ideas and suggestions during the workshop

Action Points

To effectively respond to the identified issues and challenges surrounding the promotion of *batchoy*, the participants proposed a series of strategic action points aimed at developing concrete and sustainable solutions. These proposed measures are intended to strengthen the visibility of *batchoy*, enhance collaboration among stakeholders, promote the local businesses, and ensure that promotional efforts are aligned with both cultural preservation and economic development objectives of the local government units.

Ensure Presence of Key Persons for Collaboration

One challenge encountered by *batchoy* business owners is their lack of information about the layout and design of the new airport, as well as the specific requirements for securing a space to operate *batchoy* stalls within the port premises. The desire to promote the *batchoy* is not one person or institution but the involvement of many actors. To effectively address the issues related to promoting *batchoy* in these areas, participants agreed that action must come from the private partners, local government units, and government agencies overseeing these ports.

Ms. Sofia from the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region VI informed the participants that based on their current understanding, coordination with the CAAP is typically managed through the provincial tourism offices. The DOT has already conducted several activities with the coordination and support of the local government units for the benefit of local concessionaires. She assured the participants that the key discussion points in the meeting will be submitted to their Regional Director. The recommendations arising from the meeting would be drafted and formally submitted to the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines. She recommended that there are tourism committees among LGUs and the Regional Development Council where the stakeholders can collaborate and partner for policy-making in support of the project's goal to make *batchoy* present in ports.



Figure 10. Asst. Prof. Redison explained the role of UPV-CWVS in this activity

Participants reiterated the presence of Engr. Allan Rojo, Port Manager of the PPA, and Engr. Eusebio Monserate Jr., Head of CAAP Iloilo in this dialogue since they play a crucial role in facilitating and regulating activities in these ports. Representatives from the Villar Group were also requested to attend for the activity's agenda to be communicated to them and convince them to include the proposal for the site development. In addition, representatives from the provincial and city government along with their Development Councils and the Provincial Tourism and Department of Tourism should also be involved. After all, collaboration among government agencies and stakeholders can provide feedback mechanisms and resolutions to these concerns and help sustain these efforts.

Asst. Prof. Redison emphasized that the role of the University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) in this project is primarily a facilitator - it serves as a neutral platform for the various stakeholders and state actors to meet, discuss issues and concerns, and collaborate. While the university has been actively engaged in numerous partnerships and programs, she is hoping that the Iloilo City government—particularly those responsible for the city's gastronomy programs—will lead the proactive role in promoting *batchoy* and in the establishment of associations that will strengthen and sustain the culinary heritage of the Ilonggos. Unlike the university, which lacks the authority to enforce or implement such actions, government agencies have the mandate and influence to drive these efforts forward.

Creation of a Manifesto

Recognizing and strengthening the important roles of government actors and stakeholders in contributing to the presence of *batchoy* in ports and other key areas serve as a transformative measure in promoting Ilonggos' heritage. Their collective effort and collaboration not only safeguards and promotes the local heritage, but also promotes tourism, creates livelihood opportunities for businesses, and contributes to economic growth.

With a plan for collaboration and mobilizing actions, stakeholders and partners can create a manifesto to achieve the goals set in this workshop, as proposed by Atty. Pahila. The manifesto will primarily include the list of sound recommendations by *batchoy* owners, serving as a formal declaration of shared interest to preserve and promote *batchoy* as a symbol of Ilonggo culinary heritage. Participants of the workshop agreed to the suggestion. With this document, they can articulate their goals that align their efforts in ensuring



Figure 11. Ms. Sofia of the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region VI provided suggestions on how LGUs can assist in the promotion of *batchoy* as an Ilonggo Heritage

the presence of *batchoy* in ports, preserving Ilonggo heritage, promoting sustainable livelihood, and strengthening its role in tourism, education, and cultural activities in the manifesto. This will also benefit Iloilo City's distinction as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy and make an iconic identity for the Ilonggos in the region.

The UPV CIDS and the Iloilo City government, with the assistance of Atty. Pahila, agreed that they will draft the manifesto drawing from the discussions and activities conducted since Phase 1. Workshop participants and other stakeholders are encouraged to sign the manifesto as a symbol of a shared commitment and collective effort to promote the presence of *batchoy* in ports. Once completed, it will be endorsed to the DOT which will then be forwarded to the provincial and city government. Ms. Sofia of the DOT explained that the LGUs may further support the initiative by passing a resolution through their respective Sangguniang Panlalawigan and Sangguniang Panlungsod committees on tourism to push *batchoy* as a heritage, similar to how the Antique provincial government approved a resolution recognizing Antique handicraft weaving as an important tangible heritage. She also suggested involving the Regional Development Council in this initiative. She noted that the DOT does not differentiate between the city and the province when compiling statistical reports, as they refer to Iloilo as a single whole.

Exploring the Formation of a *Batchoy* Association

Through the workshop, participants were able to identify the challenges, present individual concerns, and propose recommendations to address them. Based on these discussions, Asst. Prof. Redison pointed out that there is no single body capable of leading and representing the interests of *batchoy* owners to confront these challenges. Thus, this leads to the second agenda of the workshop which is to explore the creation of a *batchoy* association that will not only make the dish a source of regional pride, but also to promote and preserve its tradition and heritage.

Benefit of a Batchoy Association

Ms. Sofia said that the Department of Tourism has conducted several activities that contributed to making the *batchoy's* presence known to tourists. These include printing of promotional materials, creating tour circuits in the city showcasing its culinary heritage, and mapping products such as *batchoy* along their locations. In addition, their office can deliver assistance—such as training or services—more efficiently when it is directed to an association, allowing members to collectively access available opportunities. By doing so, these associations can be tapped to provide *batchoy* during activities in the city or province. This not only brings their *batchoy* house name, but also to showcase the Ilonggo *batchoy* in different flavors. She assured the participants that their concerns would be given priority and relayed to their office, with the hope of providing feedback by the next meeting.



Figure 12. Ms. Avenir of the City Health Office shared her insights on forming an association

Ms. Avenir of the City Health Office highlighted the importance of an association representing the *batchoy* industry. Along with their officers, this can provide accreditation support and protection among them by creating a memorandum of agreement with the LGUs and setting the rules and regulations to lead both the small and big *batchoy* businesses. She stressed that creating an association would give the industry a stronger, more unified voice when engaging with government agencies rather than working individually to present their insights. It would also bring together stakeholders who share the same interests, allowing individual concerns to be consolidated into a collective agenda. In doing so, the industry would gain a more cohesive and influential platform for advocating its goals.

Concerns in Forming an Association

Batchoy owners acknowledged that forming a *batchoy* association is an idea long overdue, yet they also recognized that there are several important issues to be addressed before formally forming an association.

The first is the level of participation of *batchoy* houses. Ms. Magalona explained that nobody had previously taken an initiative to form an association because most of them were not personally familiar or acquainted with each other. It was only last year that efforts were made to bring them together as a group, marking this as a commendable action that could open for future collaborations and activities related to *batchoy*. However, despite this progress, participation remains lacking. Although several meetings and workshops were conducted, only few and the same people were consistently attending the activities. Others would only send their representatives to attend. This is interpreted by the owners as a lack of full engagement.

The second concern involves the responsibilities of members in running an association. Registering an association to the Security and Exchange Commission is suggested to formalize it. However, there are reportorial requirements that need to be processed yearly. Atty. Milan suggested that there should be identified persons to deal with this. For Netong's, many *batchoy* establishments are managed by family members who are already facing daily operational challenges. Taking on additional duties required in an association may be difficult to sustain. Consequently, they emphasized the need to resolve issues that affect an association including its structure and membership, decision-making, and funding mechanisms for its operation. The third is the competitive dynamics surrounding *batchoy* products. Owners perceived *batchoy* festivals as competitions aimed at which *batchoy* house has



Figure 13. Representatives from the UPV-CWVS and Iloilo City government listened to the feedback of the *batchoy* owners in forming an association

the best flavor. They stressed that this rivalry has been amplified by social media influencers and event organizers who failed to articulate the broader purpose of the festival such as the ones held in SM City Iloilo. As a result, some owners worry that forming an association could unintentionally reinforce competition rather than promote the shared goal such as preserving culinary heritage, improving product quality, or strengthening the local *batchoy* industry as a whole. They suggested that the *batchoy* festival and the product itself should be a celebration of a culinary heritage unique to Ilonggos instead of treating it as a competition. Mr. Camarista acknowledged this suggestion, noting the need to ensure that the goals of the *batchoy* festival held at SM City are clearly defined and effectively communicated.

Lastly, there should be an established qualification of membership in a *batchoy* association, as suggested by Ms. Magalona. There should be a set of standards to determine who are qualified and committed members. They further added that how can they hope for an association if there are no identified members. Ms. Avenir also recommended to include the small *batchoy* owners as members. By doing so, they can have the opportunity to participate in discussions and activities, avail of support or assistance and work toward complying to regulatory requirements particularly related to sanitation and food handling practices.

Forming an Association as a Prerequisite for a Geographic Indicator

With the plan to form an association, participants expressed that this is a timely opportunity to discuss the geographic indicator (GI) to protect the heritage of *batchoy*, ensuring that not everyone can use the name La Paz *Batchoy*. If the GI will be granted to *batchoy*, its recognition will also increase and would formally link the dish to its place of origin in La Paz, Iloilo.

Asst. Prof. Redison stressed that to apply for a GI for *batchoy*, forming an association is a critical step since GI means representing a shared heritage from a specific geographic area rather than a single business. To use the GI name of La Paz *Batchoy* means setting, enforcing, and maintaining the standards of what it is such as its authenticity, qualities, preparation methods, and its established location. A recognized body like a *batchoy* association can unify these standards and be capable of protecting the culinary heritage and provide representation to participate in the promotion and preservation of *batchoy* as an Ilonggo product. *Batchoy* owners emphasized that there is a need to clearly define the criteria for membership in the association to avoid conflict of interest. They also stated that they do not view other establishments as competitors, as the market is wide and each has already established their brands. Additionally, they stressed that participation in events meant representing *batchoy* as an Ilonggo dish rather than their specific names.



Figure 14. Participants discussed the action points in forming a *batchoy* association

Forming a *batchoy* association is a long-term commitment. Given the lack of representation of key persons, the insufficient number of *batchoy* owners to form a solid group, and the unresolved concerns, Dr. Rebueno suggested that

the Iloilo City LGU—through the Gastronomy Council—should spearhead the creation of an association. Arch. Sy of the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) Center expressed willingness to assist the *batchoy* owners in applying for a GI. Dr. Rebueno proposed the creation of a sectoral core group created through the authority of the City Council as a temporary measure. This would allow a limited number of *batchoy* owners to participate to forward more conversations. Ms. Ledesma also committed to bring this effort to the city council. Asst. Prof. Redison concurred with this suggestion, noting that this is already provided in the provision under the mandate of the Iloilo City Gastronomy Council, headed by the City Mayor. This initiative reflects the government's enabling role, and the ongoing collaboration with stakeholders demonstrates the city's proactive efforts as a City of Gastronomy.

Strengthening Research, Marketing and Policy Support

As plans for *batchoy* are already taking shape and collaborative efforts have been made, Ms. Ledesma proposed another idea: exploring the possibility of exporting *batchoy*. She noted that several cities have successfully introduced their local products by exporting them abroad, and Ilonggos could consider doing the same. Assuming the *batchoy* houses are open to pursue this proposal, appropriate processing methods must be established to ensure that it keeps its original flavor and authenticity.



Figure 15. Representatives from *batchoy* restaurants (left and center) listened to Ms. Ledesma of her plans to export *batchoy* in the future

Asst. Prof. Redison reported that the UP Visayas food safety team has already conducted an orientation on food safety with the initiative of the Iloilo City government. They will provide assistance should there be a need for a capacity

building related to this subject on the third phase of the project. This effort is one of UP Visayas's key contributions alongside their assistance in policy formulation.

These positive developments could support *batchoy* owners in the exportation with proper packaging and processing. To forward this initiative, Ms. Ledesma plans to coordinate with Central Philippine University (CPU), the only school in the Philippines offering a program in packaging engineering. Their participation would contribute to ensure product preservation, sustainability and export readiness while also taking advantage of the use of ports. Asst. Prof. Redison expressed support by extending an invitation to the CPU faculty to participate in the initiative.

Summary

The Stakeholders' Workshop brought together representatives from various groups: *batchoy* owners, representatives from Iloilo City Government, the Department of Tourism (DOT), the City Health Office, heritage specialists, and the UP Visayas project team to strengthen collaboration and support policy development for the growth of the local *batchoy* industry. The following are the action points based on the agenda discussed.

1. **Strengthen *batchoy* presence in ports through a multi-level coordination with key port persons, government agencies and LGUs**
 - a. Request the presence of Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, Philippine Ports Authority Region VI, and the Villar Group as the proponent of the new airport to discuss plans, space allocation and requirements, regulatory requirements, and safety protocols
 - b. Have the Department of Tourism Region VI to recommend to their regional head the presence of *batchoy* in ports and assist in communication with the CAAP and PPA and identify other local products alongside *batchoy* to promote Ilonggo products as an identity
 - c. Coordinate with the Provincial and City LGU through their development councils as collaboration platforms to align tourism and cultural promotion initiatives to make *batchoy* not only as a booming business industry but also part of Iloilo's intangible cultural heritage

- d. Have the Iloilo City of Gastronomy lead in promoting *batchoy* heritage and UP Visayas as facilitator for collaboration and future activities

2. Creation of a manifesto to formalize support and strengthen *batchoy* endorsement as a culinary heritage

- a. Atty. Pahila, with the assistance of UPV CIDS-CWVS, will draft a manifesto reflecting all the workshop inputs that will outline shared commitments to preserve, promote, and strengthen *batchoy*'s cultural significance
- b. Rally the support of *batchoy* establishments, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), LGUs, and tourism bodies and gather their signature as a proof of shared commitment
- c. Endorse the manifesto to the DOT, then to provincial and city governments for possible resolutions
- d. Engage Sangguniang Panlungsod and Sangguniang Panlalawigan through their development councils to formalize support and strengthen policy backing

3. Forming a *batchoy* association in preparation for Geographic Indicator application

- a. Following the recommendation of UP Visayas, to form a sectoral core group composed of committed and active *batchoy* owners including the small *batchoy* businesses with clear standards and qualifications through the initiative of the Iloilo Gastronomy Council
- b. Form an association with a defined membership criteria, organizational structure, and a shared commitment which is heritage- and development-oriented, not competition-driven
- c. Establish a standard for the definition of “La Paz *Batchoy*” which includes authentic ingredients and preparation processes
- d. Register the association to Securities and Exchange Commission
- e. Collaborate with the City Gastronomy Council and MICE Center for support in the GI application

4. Strengthening marketing, research, and policy support

- a. Integrate marketing campaigns of Iloilo's identity as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy through DOT and local tourism offices
- b. Continue the Iloilo City-led capacity-building on food safety and regulatory compliance with the assistance of UP Visayas-CWVS
- c. Invite Central Philippine University to join planning and research initiatives for packaging design and food preservation for exportation possibilities while ensuring *batchoy's* authenticity and flavor preservation

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