

LOCAL REGIONAL STUDIES NETWORK

Towards a Batchoy Association

Safeguarding Iloilo's Iconic Culinary Heritage

Mary Rose Rebueno¹ 

Introduction

La Paz batchoy, an iconic Ilonggo culinary dish, is the signature dish of Iloilo City, a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Yet, in spite of its cultural and economic importance, the batchoy sector remains fragmented, with individual “batchoyans” working independently. At present, there is no batchoy governance structure to protect Iloilo’s culinary heritage and promote the common goals of the batchoy industry stakeholders.

This policy brief proposes the establishment of a batchoy association and recommends the formation of an official Batchoy Core Group through the Iloilo City Gastronomy Council as an interim mechanism.

This policy brief covers key findings from the batchoy stakeholders’ forum, which was organized as part of the Center for West Visayan Studies (CWVS) project, “*Namit Gid!?: A Multi-Stakeholders’ Collaboration for Ilonggo’s Batchoy.*” The project is under the Panay Weaving and Culinary Heritage Program and funded by the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS). The possibility of forming a batchoy association was discussed in last year’s stakeholders’ forum and was again highlighted during the recent forum held at the Iloilo City Hall on 22 October 2025. Some parts of this paper were taken from an earlier policy brief of Rebueno (2025).

La Paz Batchoy

Batchoy—more popularly known as La Paz batchoy, with its origins from the La Paz district in Iloilo City—is a popular part of the culinary heritage of the city. “The soup is generally prepared with tender pork meat, innards, and flavorful broth. It is garnished with crushed chicharron or crispy pork rinds, scallions, and garlic. It is a tradition to request additional *kaldo* or broth refills, reflecting a genuine appreciation for this flavorsome Ilonggo delight” (*Adobo Magazine* 2024). Some *batchoy* outlets also add a dash of the Ilonggo *ginamos* (shrimp paste) (Salas 2023).

La Paz batchoy recently received global recognition after being featured by Croatia-based online encyclopedia *Taste Atlas* as one of the world’s best offal soups, being rated as the highest among them. *Taste Atlas* noted that while the origins of the dish have various stories, “there is no doubt that it was created in Iloilo, more specifically in the district of La Paz” (Marzan 2024).

Batchoy is the Ilonggo signature dish that helped Iloilo City succeed in its bid to be part of the creative cities of UNESCO for gastronomy. In fact, according to Mr. PJ Arañador, a consultant of the city in vying for the designation, the logo of Iloilo City as part of the UNESCO creative cities originated from a bowl of batchoy (Rebueno 2025).

¹ Dr. Mary Rose G. Rebueno (mgrebueno@up.edu.ph) is a faculty member at the College of Management, University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV).

² English translation: very delicious.

Rationale for a Batchoy Association

During the *Batchoy* Stakeholders' Forum, participants expressed the need to protect the La Paz batchoy. Concerns were raised regarding the misuse of the name La Paz batchoy, with some products being labeled as La Paz batchoy despite not originating from the area. Issues included the marketing of La Paz batchoy by commercial soup manufacturers, further diluting its authenticity. Participants therefore discussed the possibility of having La Paz Batchoy registered for geographic indication (GI) to protect it as part of Iloilo's culinary heritage. However, there is a lack of a formal batchoy association for GI application and to set the GI standards for the La Paz batchoy (Rebueno 2025).

Another issue raised by the stakeholders was the lack of presence of La Paz batchoy at the Iloilo International Airport, particularly in the pre-departure area. Although some owners of batchoy establishments have inquired with CAAP, they have not received a favorable response to have La Paz batchoy strategically located in the airport. The potential of having a common service facility for batchoy noodles and meat was also mentioned.

All these issues and challenges signify how important a Batchoy association is so that Iloilo's batchoy stakeholders can collectively address GI protection for batchoy, lobby for batchoy's strategic presence in Iloilo ports, set quality standards for batchoy (which is also a requirement for GI), and be able to collaborate as batchoy enterprises towards having a common service facility and promote marketing for batchoy. A batchoy association will unify batchoy enterprises and put them in a better position to lobby for policies that will preserve and promote the batchoy industry.

Policy Problem

Given the challenges faced by the batchoy sector, as articulated during the Batchoy Stakeholders' Forum, without a formal organization for the batchoy establishments, there is no institutional mechanism that will specifically address concerns of having an authentic La Paz batchoy. There is also fragmented representation, with "batchoyans" engaging independently with the government and other relevant agencies. There is also the absence of a legitimate batchoy association that will set the necessary quality standards needed for GI registration. The lack of a collective batchoy association undermines Iloilo's

capacity to protect its own culinary heritage. The presence of a batchoy organization could have been the governance mechanism that would turn the individual efforts of batchoy enterprises into cohesive, sustained collaboration.

Challenges in Forming a Batchoy Association

Forming a batchoy organization will take time, given the fragmented nature of the batchoy sector. On a positive note, the batchoy owners who were able to attend the stakeholders' forum were willing to be part of a batchoy association. A batchoy owner mentioned that the establishment of a batchoy organization is long overdue. According to him, the association can help protect the legacy of their elders who started their batchoy establishment. Another advantage is the opportunity for the batchoy association itself to organize the Batchoy Festival.

However, the batchoy owners expressed that having a batchoy association also entails a big responsibility on their part, because it will already mean representation of the Iloilo City batchoy group. It will also need commitment on the part of the batchoy owners to attend meetings and implement the association's initiatives. At this point, another owner of a batchoy enterprise mentioned that there are still a lot of issues that will have to be addressed besides the commitment of the batchoy owners, such as qualification requirements to be a member, and the need for more exploratory talks among batchoy owners, given that it was only last year, during the Batchoy stakeholders' forum that they were able to meet and discuss as a collective batchoy sector.

Policy Recommendation

As an interim mechanism, it is recommended that a Batchoy Core Group be officially formed by the Iloilo City Gastronomy Council. This will be a transitional structure that convenes the batchoy key stakeholders while there is still no formal batchoy association. It will serve as a collaborative platform to initiate standard-setting, heritage safeguarding and batchoy sectoral promotion while establishing the foundation for a sustainable long-term association.

This Batchoy Core Group can:

- facilitate communication among heritage batchoyans, new-generation batchoy shops, and relevant agencies, whether public or private;
- draft preliminary batchoy quality standards needed for GI;
- consolidate batchoy narratives for cultural tourism and UNESCO-related initiatives;
- pilot joint marketing, training and research initiatives. It can facilitate capacity-building and knowledge exchange to ensure continuous innovation while protecting tradition; and
- take the preliminary steps for possible GI registration of La Paz batchoy.

A journey begins with a single step. The Iloilo City Government can mandate the Iloilo City Gastronomy Council to convene the Batchoy core group. The Batchoy core group will be under the umbrella of the Iloilo City Gastronomy Council.

Batchoy establishments, through the Core Group, can then participate in shared governance and align efforts with the UNESCO Creative Cities endeavors. The Department of Tourism can also support the Batchoy Core Group by recommending batchoy visibility in airports, seaports, and gastronomic circuits.

Having the Batchoy Core Group enables immediate coordination of batchoy stakeholders and can build the momentum toward a formal batchoy organization. It can start developing the roadmap for the eventual formation of a batchoy association, including governance structures, membership frameworks, and organizational mandates. Preserving Iloilo's batchoy will entail coordinated governance, shared responsibility, and the commitment to safeguard Iloilo's gastronomic legacy for future generations.

References

- Adobo Magazine*. 2024. "Check out These Famous Dishes from Iloilo, The Philippines' First UNESCO Creative City for Gastronomy." 5 April 2024. <https://www.adobomagazine.com/philippine-news/iloilo-unesco-gastronomy-citation/>.
- Marzan, Joseph Bernard A. 2024. "BET-CHOY: Ilonggo Signature Dish Is World's Best Offal Soup." *Daily Guardian*, 7 November 2024. <https://dailyguardian.com.ph/bet-choy-ilonggo-signature-dish-is-worlds-best-offal-soup/>.
- Rebueno, Mary Rose. 2025. "Geographical Indication for the La Paz Batchoy." *UP CIDS Policy Brief*, no 2025-02. UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies. <https://cids.up.edu.ph/policy-brief/geographical-indication-la-paz-batchoy/>.
- Salas, Vicente. 2023. "How Iloilo Became a UNESCO Creative City for Gastronomy." *Positively Filipino - Online Magazine for Filipinos in the Diaspora*, 29 November 2023. <https://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/how-iloilo-became-a-unesco-creative-city-for-gastronomy>.

THE UP CIDS POLICY BRIEF SERIES

The UP CIDS Policy Brief Series features short reports, analyses, and commentaries on issues of national significance and aims to provide research-based inputs for public policy.

Policy briefs contain findings on issues that are aligned with the core agenda of the research programs under the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

The views and opinions expressed in this policy brief are those of the author/s and neither reflect nor represent those of the University of the Philippines or the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies. UP CIDS policy briefs cannot be reprinted without permission from the author/s and the Center.

Center For Integrative And Development Studies

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

The Program

The Local Regional Studies Network (LRSN) aims to create a network of research programs engaging in local and regional areas of study, involving scholars and research centers based in the different UP System constituent universities.

Editorial Board

Rosalie Arcala Hall
Editor-in-Chief

Honeylet L. Alerta
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

Program Editors

Education and Capacity Building Cluster

Dina S. Ocampo
Lorina Y. Calingasan
Education Research Program

Rosalie Arcala Hall
Program on Higher Education Research and Policy Reform

Romylyn Metila
Marlene Ferido
Assessment, Curriculum, and Technology Research Program

Ebinezer R. Florano
Program on Data Science for Public Policy

Social, Political, and Cultural Studies Cluster

Rogelio Alicor L. Panoa
Program on Social and Political Change

Darwin J. Absari
Islamic Studies Program

Rosalie Arcala Hall
Strategic Studies Program

Editorial Staff

Jheimeel P. Valencia
Bryan Patrick Garcia
Copyeditor

Development Cluster

Annette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans
Program on Escaping the Middle-Income Trap: Chains for Change

Antoinette R. Raquiza
Julius Lustro
Political Economy Program

Eduardo C. Tadem
Maria Dulce Natividad
Program on Alternative Development

Iris Thiele Isip-Tan
Program on Health Systems Development

New Programs

Maria Angeles O. Catelo
Food Security Program

Weena S. Gera
Urban Studies Program

Benjamin M. Vallejo, Jr.
Conservation and Biodiversity

Rosalie Arcala Hall
Local and Regional Studies Network

Alexa Samantha R. Hernandez
Editorial Assistant

Mikaela Anna Cheska D. Orlino
Layout Artist

Get your policy papers published. Download open-access articles.

The Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives (PJPP), the annual peer-reviewed journal of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), welcomes submissions in the form of full-length policy-oriented manuscripts, book reviews, essays, and commentaries. The PJPP provides a multidisciplinary forum for examining contemporary social, cultural, economic, and political issues in the Philippines and elsewhere. Submissions are welcome year-round.

For more information, visit cids.up.edu.ph. All issues/articles of the PJPP can be downloaded for free.

Get news and the latest publications.

Join our mailing list to get our publications delivered straight to your inbox! Also, you'll receive news of upcoming webinars and other updates.

bit.ly/signup_cids

We need your feedback.

Have our publications been useful? Tell us what you think.

bit.ly/dearcids



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue
University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City 1101



cids.up.edu.ph

Telephone (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268
(02) 8426-0955

Email cids@up.edu.ph
cidspublications@up.edu.ph

Website cids.up.edu.ph