HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH
Art Showcase
O’Neill Level One Gallery
October 1-31, 2014
Opening Reception
October 1, 2014
5:00-7:00 PM

“Presentando culturas sin fronteras, Presenting cultures without borders”

Featuring artwork by:
Natalie Blardony
A&S, 2015
Hispanic Heritage Month Presents:
“Culturas Sin Fronteras, Cultures without Borders”
A photo exhibit by Natalie Blardony

Growing up, I was always very aware of my culture. As the daughter of immigrants from a developing country, my parents routinely conveyed the importance of retaining not just my, but “our” culture, no matter how hard they worked to assimilate into this new environment. Even though people immediately labeled me as simply “Asian” (and so, in their words, “basically Chinese”), I felt more Spanish than anything else. My dad lived in Spain during his teenage years and is fluent in the language where a quarter of my heritage lies. He is so comfortable that he feels more at home speaking Spanish than he does Tagalog1, where he spent a majority of his life before moving to the States.

At home, I would hear this weird mix of Spanish, Tagalog, and English (Spanglish?) that confused me for some time. But now I have come to really appreciate how it constantly reminds me of all aspects of my ethnic identity. My dad would always tell me about the importance of maintaining our roots and never forgetting any of that which they worked so hard to carry with them halfway across the world.

To me, food has always held the power to do that. It can bring forth memories from childhood, link cultures, and strengthen identity. Something that has always intrigued me about this food I was familiar with and grew up eating, was that a lot of Filipino dishes are either literally in Spanish, like arroz a la cubana, or heavily influenced by Spanish, like pork adobo or bistek tagalog. The spices we use, the incorporation of rice, the flavors, they all seemed to meld with that found in Spanish cuisine.

Tying this into Hispanic Heritage Month’s theme of “culturas sin fronteras” or “culture without borders,” I find that food embodies this notion. Filipino food so closely links to Spanish, and in turn, to Latin cooking. The adobo seasoning found in dishes from this Southeast Asian country to Latin America and links these two cultures that might, superficially, seem vastly different but are actually, quite similar.

In this proposed project, I demonstrate this linkage of cultures through food and how there are no places you cannot go when it comes to this. The goal here is to exemplify the idea of cross-cultural exchange and show how linked Latin American countries and the Filipinos are through their cuisine and shared status of having Spain as their colonizer.

Since Spanish and Filipino culture have always been so interchangeable to me, in a lot of ways, it continually surprises me to see that people are rather checked to find that the two are so closely related in many aspects ranging from holiday traditions to language to customs and more. I really want to showcase these similarities as well, and find that this “blind viewing” of the foods would accomplish this, in addition to my other goals. It would, hopefully, make the viewer really think about the importance of culture through food and how food is really a bridge between worlds that might, otherwise, seem so far apart. To go even further, I brought along one of my closest friends, who happens to be Dominican, and we ourselves would be an embodiment of this project and the things I am trying to say through my work.

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1 Tagalog is the national language of the Philippines.