

# Pagana Maranao

MARANAO, LANAO DEL SUR PROVINCE, NORTHWESTERN MINDANAO ISLAND, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. *This is the traditional feast of the Maranao. Pagana means any food offered to guests. Pagana Maranao (Kapagana) means that the food offered are special Maranao dishes and the way of serving is distinctively according to tradition. It is obligatory during weddings, special occasions and all celebrations, honoring a guest. And if there is death in the family, Pagana Maranao is held for a week.*



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IN A WEDDING, the parents of the bride are charged with the *pagana*. They produce four *tabaks* (large brass trays) – Zamboanga type – where the *ampas*, a decorated table cloth with four saucers called *batointan* (colorful chinaware) is filled with different kinds of *mamis* (sweets) like *browa*, *tamokonsi*, sliced *dodol*, *gorinda*, *saliyo*, *saleg*, *awani*, *panganan* and others. At the center of each *tabak* is a medium-sized *tabak*, covered with its own *ampas* containing another set of *batointan* filled with more *mamis*. On top of this medium-sized *tabak* is still another smaller *tabak* covered with an *ampas*. On this is placed the *lapad a totokoden* (rice tray of chinaware) filled with rice decorated with hard boiled eggs, with four more little trays filled with fried chicken, carabao meat, four glasses of water and four bowls of soup. Four *panalagadans* (brass stands) with *solangs* (big porcelain jars of water) are also prepared. Four *tangelas* with cuspidors are served to the parents of the groom – two for the elders of his mother's side, the other two for his elders on his father's side.

People who attend are served with medium-sized *tabaks* with three plates of rice and three

bowls of fish and one glass. They are served with the *rararaw* (jug of water), *sakdo* (dipper) and basin. Each *tabak* is for three persons. After the meal, the relatives of the bride offer betel-nut chew to the guests. For the ladies, they also offer the *bintang a bolawan* (circular, golden cosmetic container) for them to use. For special guests, the *tabak* is placed on top of a *panggaw* (elevated structure/bed) and servants are made to hold the *tabak* while they eat.

Traditionally, the main menu consists of chicken, beef, mudfish (*arowan*), yellow rice (*konong*) and desserts like *dol*, *tiyateg*, *browa* and other delicacies. The serving of chicken represents the high socio-economic status of the guests and host. In the old days, wild chicken (*materem*) frequently trapped in the forest is served, although now domestic chicken is used due to the belief about a person having twin spirits to whom a totem chicken (*totoro*) is dedicated.

*Hadja Sohaylah Sodiada M. Unte*

(opposite page) The formal feast of the Maranao - the *pagana*, with all its exuberant flair.