

Aphrodisiac (?) restaurant

If your bible is the *L'Esquisse Gastronomique* and your favorite bedtime reading matter is *Brillat-Savarin's Physiology of Taste*, then *Mariposa de Vida* is the restaurant you've been looking for. For, while curiosity and concupiscence may be your initial reason for patronizing it, having heard of its aphrodisiac offerings, it is its excellent cuisine and varied menu that eventually can turn you into a regular diner.

But there is truth, perhaps, to their claims of serving aphrodisiac food, for

isn't the right diet supposed to be the key to the feeling of well-being that improves one's virility? So, as long as you don't expect to come snorting out of the place like a libidinous bull after one meal, expect some very pleasant surprises for your palate.

Sunlight streaming through the stained-glass doors designed to simulate the richly colored wings of a butterfly makes the cream and orange interiors of *Mariposa de Vida* cozier than it already is. The shells and cara-

paces of turtles, oysters, swordfish, and reptiles line the walls. At the end of the room are four aquariums where snakes, prawns, crabs, and fish swim, waiting to be chosen and cooked according to the diner's preference.

The aphrodisiac concept is a brainchild of Ruby Tiong Tan whose Indonesian friend interested in exotic cooking taught her most of the kitchen lore that went into the planning of the menu. Running the place with her is her business partner, Lally Laurel-Trinidad.

The menu is divided into 13 parts. Under hors d'oeuvres fall quite familiar fare, what one would usually meet in any first-class restaurant: assorted canapés, sardines, shrimps, ham cones, eggs à la Russe, and the like. Skipping these, you may decide to have instead their aphrodisiac appetizers, a choice of chicken or duck balut. Yes, you may have known about the aphrodisiac qualities of chicken embryo all along, but where can you buy them, especially if you live in a place where no balut vendor passes?

Under the soup section are again the classic soups one may have tasted or seen in French, Spanish, or Chinese restaurants, but this time all under one roof and cooked without the slightest trace of monosodium glutamate: *Bouillabaisse*, *Sopa de Ajos*, French onion soup with cheese, bird's nest soup, to mention a few.

The choice of the main course becomes difficult, what with a multitude of tempting dishes. Identified properly under the classification of Protein are imported grilled steaks served in the classic manner and styles, also fowl, frog's legs, kidneys, and callos; a section on Iron lists seven ways of cooking calf's liver, a lengua dish, and chicken liver. For calcium-rich dishes, there is seafood: shrimps, scallops, crabs, oysters, abalone, shark's fins, fish—mostly steamed to preserve

their taste and nutritional values. The sauce that goes with each dish is well worth the meal. Braised mango bean sprouts, steamed peas, green salads, and other separate vegetable dishes are listed under Vitamins and Minerals.

For the specialties of the house, the reason you will want to go there instead of any other place, there is a separate listing for food that is supposed to aid virility and fertility: *Valentino Beef*, *Pochon de Casanova Monca* (monkey), *King of Siam* hare, *Seseto de Rubiosa Cochon*, *Clopatra Vuity*, *Kama Sutra Cochon*, *Dona Juan Chevre*, *Jezebel Vuity*, *Desiree Pochon*, and *Pochon de Amor*. And for food that will make you feel anything is possible because they're supposed to give you strength, stamina, not to mention improving your blood circulation, choose any of these: *Atlas Chicken Viva*, *Hercules Pigeon*, *King Solomon Quails*, *Samson Duck*, *Khan Warriors Black Chinese Chicken* stuffed with bird's nest, *Speed of Mercury Chicken* (chicken claws), *King Arthur Fish Lips* with chicken clack, *Bonaparte Tendon*, and *Geronimo Ox Tail* with *Tendon*.

Billed as their star aphrodisiac feature is the *Round Robin*, a concentrate of the juice of one kilo of beef skillfully extracted into a bowl.

For the staunch believer in cooking by steaming, there are almost two dozen choices: chicken, shrimps, ox tail, liver, gizzards, shark's fins, tripe, crabs, duck, and vegetables. All are served with siopao dough or steamed unpolished rice.

Game and seafood come from all over the Philippines to assure the prime choice for each meal served in the restaurant. For those who want to come on the day when what they want is available, the schedule: Monday—rabbit; Tuesday—monkey; Wednesday—frog's legs; Thursday—wild bird; Friday—wild boar or deer; Saturday—snake.



Sea-snakes: an appetizer or aphrodisiac?

INTRAMUROS

The city that was

A three-man Spanish technical mission, composed of Juan Maria San Juan Garcia, Jose de la Mata Gorrostiza, and Carlos Picardo Castello, visited the Philippines recently to help draw up plans for the development of Intramuros as a major tourist attraction. For three centuries, *Intramuros*, also sometimes called the *Walled City*, served as the hub of political and social life during the Spanish regime in the Philippines. A joint project of the Philippine and Spanish governments under a cultural agreement signed a few years ago, the development plan calls for the construction of a miniature *Intramuros* within the ruins of the old city. Spain has pledged a P10-million loan for the project. How did the original *Intramuros* look like?

In 1574, barely three years after Miguel Lopez de Legaspi had razed what was then called *Maynilad*, King Philip II of Spain decreed it the capital city of the Philippines. Shortly after, the friars came. They brought with them the beatitudes and the cross and taught the people to look forward to the heavenly rewards of

meekness and obedience.

Then, there slowly rose out of the rubble, port facilities to accommodate the galleon trade, huge churches, imposing monuments, concrete buildings, religious schools, cobblestone streets, all designed after those in the great cities of Spain.

At the same time, massive walls were built. Constructed around an area of approximately 120 hectares, the walls protected the city against marauders who came from the China Sea and the distant South.

"*Entra los Moros!*" was always the urgent cry of sentinels guarding the parapets every time they sighted an alien ship—and this went on for a considerable length of time until the cry became a legend and a name. Thus, according to some historians, the original core city became known as "*Intramuros*."

The old city had six gates: *Almacenes*, *Santo Domingo*, *Parian*, *Santa Lucia*, *Puerta Real* and *Postigo*. The city within the walls was the seat of government and where most of the aristocratic Spaniards lived.

Inside the walls, the Spaniards tried hard to make it as much like Spain as possible. Public offices were solidly constructed. Cathedrals and churches of massive proportions were built so that one could see them ten miles away. Streets were paved with granite (*piedra de China*) brought by the Chinese traders and lighted with gas lamps ordered from Rome. Houses were built one story above the ground and were constructed with stone of great thickness. They were vaulted with ornate iron clasps.

The governor's house was so huge that a village could fit into its site. The square in front was lined with shade trees and furnished with lamps of Romanesque origins.

No one dared walk the cobblestone streets, for here, everyone had one or two horse-drawn carriages for promenading around. The governor's carriage was drawn by six horses and was preceded by several liveried men on horseback.

The homes inside the city were well furnished with mirrors, handsome paintings, globe lamps, crystal chandeliers, writing desks and such other household effects that could shame a noble Basque at that time.

There were few big social affairs, but evening parties were not rare. Among the younger set, there was singing and carousing around the piano, but the elders usually kept themselves away as a matter of dis-

tinction.

There were siestas in the afternoon, and at three o'clock, chocolate and chorros for every one. Life was good and beautiful, for how could one have felt otherwise—protected by those looming, impenetrable walls?

This life-style went on for generations and seemed to be without end until British guns thundered in Manila Bay. The British occupation temporarily displaced the city residents, but soon after the last of the British soldiers had gone, *Intramuros* was rebuilt and the Spaniards added more walls as an elaborate system of outer defenses.

Then came the Revolution, and subsequently, the Americans. The glory of Spain remained in the domes and spires that dominated the skyline of Manila, but *Intramuros*, for all its architectural and Roman splendor, was dying. *Intramuros*, by the way it looked even before the last World War, was not what it used to be.

The end of the war finally left the famed *Walled City* in shambles. Slabs of concrete lay pell-mell everywhere, and only the ruins of a once glorious city stood to tell the story of a long-gone era. Parts of the destroyed walls have since been rebuilt. Today, near or right beside the walls stand buildings of all shapes and sizes, housing people engrossed in the demands of modern-day life and only occasionally reflecting, perhaps, on a pile of rubble redolent with history.