

PREPARATION OF FISH SAUCE (PATIS) *

Fish sauce to the Filipinos is what soy sauce is to the Chinese and Japanese. The local name for fish sauce is *patis*. It is a common ingredient in Filipino cookery and is most preferred to salt especially in Central Luzon. A properly prepared fish sauce has a palatable and appetizing flavor.

The manufacture of fish sauce is a household industry in many fishing villages around Manila Bay. In Malabon and Navotas, towns about four miles north of Manila, the production of the sauce is a big industry. There are at least fifteen commercial plants for fish-sauce manufacture in these towns. The manufacture of fish sauce does not require any machinery. Large wooden vats or a series of concrete tanks used as containers of the salted fish from which the sauce is derived, and earthen jars are the main equipment.

Sardines are the most common species used as materials in the preparation of the sauce. Anchovies and ambassids are also used. But the best product is prepared from gizzard shad (*Dorosemidae*). The materials are secured mostly in times of glut. Fish sauce is also prepared from a species of small shrimps (*Atya* sp.), locally called *alamang*.

As soon as the fish is received in the plant, it is washed several times to remove slime and particles of sand, and the trash is removed. Then the fish is mixed with salt in the proportion of one part salt by measure to three parts fish. Local coarse-grained salt is used. Salt and fish are mixed thoroughly and uniformly. The mixture is shoveled into wooden vats or a series of concrete tanks. Boards are placed

on top of the mixture and weighted with stones to prevent the fish from floating. The salted fish is left untouched to follow the natural slow process of protein digestion. This digestion is accomplished in months or even years, the longer the better. When the required time has been attained the liquid is allowed to drip from a spigot placed close to the bottom of the container. The liquid is collected and placed in earthen jars which are properly covered. These jars containing the liquid are laid aside to age under sunshine. After aging the liquid is ready for bottling and finally for the market.

Sometimes the digested salted fish is cooked in large kettles. A certain point is observed during the cooking and when this is reached the process is stopped and the content of the kettle is allowed to cool. During the cooling the solids settle down. The supernatant liquid is filtered and the clear liquid bottled. Cooked product like this does not require aging.

If the material used is small shrimps the salted shrimps develop into a paste after months of storage. This paste, known locally as *bagoong* (fish paste), may be marketed as it is. The paste is pressed to obtain the juice which is cooked. When a certain point is reached the boiling liquid is allowed to cool and settle. The clear liquid is separated and bottled ready for the market and sold as fish sauce also which is a more palatable product than that prepared from fish.

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