



Purple Yam at the Edible Festival, Chelsea Market

October 4, 2010



Littleneck clams on purple heirloom rice from the Philippines

Tonight, Monday, Oct 4, 2010, the Edible Manhattan and Brooklyn magazines are doing a tasting of 11 local ingredients at the Chelsea Market, 6 – 9 pm.

We are thrilled that they invited Purple Yam to participate and even more thrilled that The Lobster Place (also at the Chelsea Market) has donated a bushel of littleneck clams from Long Island, NY for us to cook in any way we wanted.

I think that it is about time that the movement to promote local produce, seafood and meats embrace other cultures and cuisines. So far, it has remained to be an "American" movement involving mostly "American" chefs and restaurants. But what is American? We all know what it means and what foods, ingredients that movement includes.

Here at Purple Yam, we have been doing a local and beyond take on this movement. Even when we were at Cendrillon, we had partnered with many local farmers, microbreweries and meat purveyors and distributors like Heritage Foods USA to showcase these local and organic ingredients using Filipino pan-Asian dishes and cooking methods.

One of our missions, too, was to spread the word of preserving our heirloom varieties in our home country — the Philippines. So for the past 5 years, we have been using the organic heirloom rice varieties grown in the rice terraces of the Philippines. The rice terraces are being abandoned by its farmers simply because their rice varieties are not marketed well and they can barely survive. But what we don't realize is that when these farmers abandon the farms, their rice grains which are theirs and have been passed down from one generation to another — will be lost forever. We lose many of our heritage grains daily because of neglect and lack of awareness among govt officials and the buying public in general.



Suman or little rice cakes made with purple diket

So for tonight's offering at the Chelsea Market, we will be serving miniature suman or rice cakes made with the purple diket (glutinous) heirloom rice from the terraces. When one bites and eats these grains, one partakes in a meal that our ancestors have eaten centuries ago. These grains carry the same DNA that our ancestors planted because these are not hybrids. That is what is meant by heirloom. From what many studies have proven many times before, eating organic heirloom produce are the healthiest food to eat as heirlooms contain more nutrients than hybrids.



Littleneck clams donated by The Lobster Place,

Chef Romy Dorotan of Purple Yam is cooking the littleneck clams in coconut milk, chiles, carrots and celery. For the suman tonight, he will add organic heirloom polenta made from yellow and red corn which we get from Cayuga Farms (NY) to the purple heirloom rice of the Philippine terraces.

The beauty of many local and beyond is precisely what we show tonight. The event will embody everything that we stand for — creating delicious food with the best and freshest ingredients provided by people who are passionate about their food and culture.

Thank you to Brendan Hayes of The Lobster Place at the Chelsea Market for giving us those delicious littlenecks and thank you to Samantha Seier of the Edible Brooklyn and Manhattan magazines for including us in your event.