

Australian Filipina

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For more articles, go to our website on www.australianfilipina.com

EDITOR'S NOTE

When I was in the Philippines last December, elections fever was already catching. By now I'm sure it's at epidemic levels.

For those who can't partake in the excitement live, we hope you find the guide for overseas voters helpful (p1). And if you're not a registered OAV, please register for the next elections – 150,000 out of 11 million people is just not good enough considering how much of the Philippine economy is propped up by the money coming from all the OFWs (overseas Filipino workers).

On a lighter note, I am very happy to introduce two new writers at Australian Filipina magazine. Katrina Quesada writes about the coffee habits of the Filipino community (p2) and Dominique Briones shares why a lot of her fellow Generation Yers aren't flying the coup so early anymore (p2). Thanks for your contributions lovely ladies!

Finally, we were fortunate enough to be treated to a night out with the Vibe team. Dinner was scrumptuous and the show – Wicked – was absolutely entertaining (p4).

It's also Mother's Day this May, so don't forget to show your Mum just how much you love them. I know mine will be pretty special 'coz of my little guy. Happy reading!

Mimmette xo



POLITICS

Survival guide for overseas voters

You don't have to be in the Philippines to have your say on who's going to be the country's next president. If you're eligible to vote, MICHELLE BALTAZAR shows how to make your vote count.



Four of the Presidential candidates: (left to right) Manny Villar, Richard Gordon, Gilbert Teodoro and Noyon Aquino

Filipino expats, migrant workers, dual citizens and holders of temporary or permanent resident visas can vote in the 2010 elections provided they are registered OAVs – overseas absentee voters.

Registered OAVs have until 6:00 p.m. on 10 May, Manila time (8:00 p.m. AEST) to vote. The Philippine Consulate website in Sydney (www.philippineconsulate.com.au) has a detailed guide on how to fill out a COMELEC ballot and send it to the Consulate.

How you cast your vote differs among the various Philippine embassies and consulates. For example, the Philippine Consulate in Sydney accepts votes by mail while other Philippine foreign missions require voters to do so in person. It's best to contact the Philippine embassy or consulate in your state or country to find out how you can vote.

For more information, the Commission on Elections website, www.comelec.gov.ph has a section for OAVs. All online Philippines news media also feature daily news about the electoral campaigns alongside other websites such as www.politicalarena.com and www.mggphils.wordpress.com for the Movement for Good Governance.

You've already missed out on

the 2010 elections if you haven't registered by now, even if you're eligible to vote. Those already registered as an OAV don't have to register again. However, if you haven't voted for two consecutive elections or moved country or state of address, you must register again with your new details.

To participate in the next elections, go to the Philippine Embassy or Consulate during the period of registration, which is likely from February to August 2012 (or the year before the 2013 elections).

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Philippines' Commission on Elections (COMELEC), there are more than 150,000 OAVs around the world, including more than 1,200 from Australia and New Zealand. That's a small number given the Philippines' population is more than 92 million and around 11 million are reported to be living overseas. So if you know Filipinos who are eligible to vote, encourage them to become a registered OAV.

IN THE RUNNING

Just as America's youth turned up in force to support US president Barack Obama during his presidential campaign, earlier reports suggest young Filipinos

will have the 'swing vote' in this year's elections as 40 per cent of voters are 18 to 35 and they represent a potential three million first-time voters, according to data quoted by political blog, The Diplomat (www.the-diplomat.com).

But according to the April 2010 Pre-Election national survey by Pulse Asia (www.pulseasia.com.ph), presidential candidate Senator Benigno 'Noyon' Aquino III is leading the polls with four in 10 Filipino registered voters (39 per cent) showing their support.

Tied for second place with an overall voter preference of 20 per cent are former President Joseph Estrada Ejercito and Senator Manuel B. Villar, Jr.

The other presidential candidates including JC De Los Reyes, Dick Gordon and Eddie Villanueva have the support of at most 7 per cent of registered voters.

While the focus has largely been on the presidential hopefuls, the 2010 elections is about deciding on the country's next government with 17,000 national and local positions to be filled. It is going to be a tight contest with more than 85,000 candidates for these positions. ●

Special Thanks: The Australian Filipina thanks the Philippine Consulate in Sydney for their assistance on the election articles.

I am voting for ...

Australian Filipina readers tell us why they're voting for their candidate.

"I believe Noynoy Aquino should be the next President. He's the one who stands for the good of the common people.

He has presented himself as the one with integrity, honesty and genuine interest for changing the plight of the poor. Past events and issues haven't uncovered or even associated corrupt dealings by him

May the Filipino people be guided by their conscience, rational thinking and truth when they go to the polling booths on election day."

Violi C., Australia

"I believe Senator Manny Villar will win. He's proven himself as a leader already as a congressman, and a Senator, coming from a poor family and doing great as a businessman. He doesn't need donations to run his campaign, so he doesn't owe anybody a favour later on."

Abe P., USA

"I want Bro. Eddie Villanueva to be the next president of our country. For the reasons that he doesn't have any immoral and corruptions issue when he founded the Jesus Is Lord Church up to present.

And he's the only candidate who has a

patriotic heart for our country. The love of God and the love of our country is what Bro. Eddie is about."

Jun L., Philippines

"Gibo Teodoro comes across as a very decent man with good intentions. When he opens his mouth, you can't help but agree with him. Or if not, just leaves you in awe and admiration of the brainpower behind his persona. As days go by, I'm more and more convinced that he is my president. Nobody - nobody but him."

Rosanna A., Philippines

"My next president of the Philippines will be Senator Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III. I think he can solve the problems on corruption and good governance in the country once elected as president.

I have high hopes in him for he's a man of principles as he would also help the plight of the masses and common good for a better and progressive Philippines in the years to come."

Hurley C., Philippines

"Of course, Noynoy is the lesser evil among them all. No history of corruption. Villar, he used the money of the people to build hi-ways

going to his subdivision in Cavite. He couldn't even donate a piece of land to build a church, how much more? *Ang kanyang pagkakanang-gawa is on TV lang.* (His charity is for TV only.)"

Fel F., USA

"Gilbert Teodoro's academic credentials are unmatched by any of the other candidates this year: recognising that the 1987 Constitution requires amendments that will remove restrictions to economic growth; encouraging productivity, the growth of small business, and infrastructure development; and pledging not to pardon a single government official convicted of corruption, are some of the elements of his platform that will provide a huge benefit to the Philippines.

While some of his current policies – notably those on healthcare, education, labour, and significantly, the Mindanao conflict – remain rather rhetoric-heavy and detail-light. His record from Congress and as Secretary of National Defense suggest that, over time, he will become more comprehensive, active and consistent on these issues."

Nicole D., Australia

HOW TO ...

Be a dual citizen

If you're an Australian citizen, the upcoming elections may be a good time to consider taking up a dual citizenship. A natural-born Filipino who gave up their citizenship in the Philippines to become naturalised in another country can apply for dual citizenship and become Filipino by nationality again.

You must provide your original Philippine birth certificate, an old Philippine passport, certificate of Australian citizenship, current Australian passport, and (if the applicant is married) their marriage certificate. For more information, check out www.philippineconsulate.com.au or you can go through the Bureau of Immigration of the Philippines on www.immigration.gov.ph ●

LIFESTYLE

Coffee makes its mark

Whether you like it straight or drizzled with caramel and sprinkled with chocolate, KATRINA QUESADA gives the inside information on what caffeine of choice the community is drinking.

Be it in the morning, afternoon or night, everyone has a special time of day for their cuppa.

On a local scale the 'coffee culture', as it is commonly known, is catching on like a fever. Those recently diagnosed: the Australian-Filipino community.

It's true. We've seen the disease take over these people while on the way to work, during work, at school, at university... the list goes on. And while you may think

it does not concern you – the one who would not come anywhere near coffee with a 10-metre pole – it does. Coffee is just not simply consumed anymore – it has created a culture and a whole new social experience among the majority of Filipinos living in Sydney today.

As one Australian-Filipina who has been a junior barista for the past two years, I know this all too well. If you too call the western suburbs your home, you would

agree that there is a 99 per cent chance you will come into contact, or simply see, other Filipinos around.

And so, they come and go by the café daily, some on occasion, some who come back two to three times a day. I can name their usual orders off by heart: Ariel, macadamia latte, two sugars; Ruby, skinny cappuccino; James, large white chocolate mocha; and Tita Del is the most well-known, signified by a skinny mocha.

These people are some of many who come during the week. They don't plan to stay for long. But come the weekend, you get more couples, friends and families who are happy to sit down and savour the bittersweet flavours and full bodied aroma of their beverages. Tito Frank can always be seen taking the time to enjoy his skim latte. The pastor will either be reading

“Coffee may be seen as a vice by some, but to others it has become a reason to be with friends and an invitation to make new ones.”

the daily newspaper or simply sitting with his wife. It is definitely a more social atmosphere on the weekends and the best time to watch the coffee culture at its peak.

I also have to note that I have noticed that, generally speaking, the majority of Filipinos tend to order mocha flavoured beverages. I remember back to when I got my first dose of caffeine literally years ago – I had a strong loyalty to my Gloria Jean's mocha 'Oreo Bash' chiller. I was wondering why this was the case, so I took

the question to four of my girlfriends – over a cup of coffee, naturally.

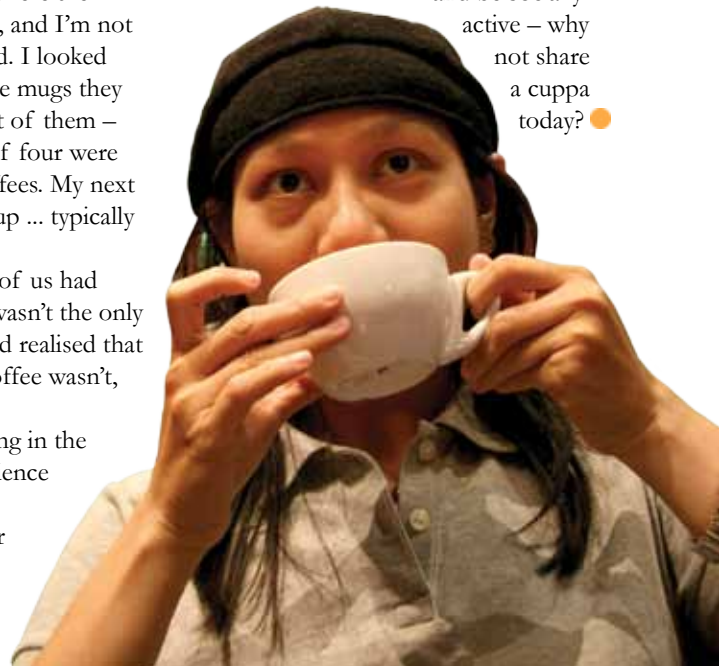
One guessed it was because we are so used to having so much flavour in our traditional dishes. Our spaghetti is a prime example. Personally, I have never been to a Filo party or gathering where the spaghetti has not been sweet, and I'm not complaining! The girls agreed. I looked around at the mugs they had in front of them – three out of four were mocha coffees. My next thought? “Yup ... typically Filipina.”

But the fact that almost all of us had opted for mocha that night wasn't the only thing that got me thinking. I'd realised that the simple act of drinking coffee wasn't, well, so simple.

We were young women living in the coffee culture, a social experience which calls you to sit down, wind down, enjoy and savour both flavour and the time with friends. To relax and to connect and to reconnect.

Coffee may be seen as a vice by some, but to others it has become a reason to be with friends and an invitation to make new ones. And Filipino Sydneysiders are taking the opportunity. A simple daily experience which allows us to espresso ourselves

and be socially active – why not share a cuppa today? ●



OPINION

There's no place like home

Who needs ruby slippers to go back home when many young people in the real Oz haven't even left, yet. DOMINIQUE BRIONES lets us in on why many of her peers are opting to stay longer at Mum and Dad's.

“So, schnitzel and salad huh? I bet your mum cooks more exotic food than this for you at home ...”

If you ever want to put off a Filipino girl from free lunch at work, broach the subject of her residential status.

It's not like such a statement is incorrect. In truth, my colleague deserves a prize for her clear powers of perception into my mum's culinary skills. Nevertheless, it's the two assumptions behind the statement, forming my image, which is the source of all awkwardness:

1. I am a 20-something, junior staff member. This slots me into the great socio-demographic pigeon-hole that is 'Generation Y', a cohort so notorious for their apparent crimes of egotism, mindless consumerism, and consummate ideological flakiness;

2. I am an Asian migrant female. This status is so mysterious in the eyes of contemporary Western society, with the exception of the generalised idea that we live for our families until we get married or die an old maid.

Whether individually or combined, these two stereotypes point to one great assumption: I choose to live at home with my parents because it's one heck of an easy life. But it appears I'm not alone being typecast.



“We prefer to live at home because this is where most of our passions lie; our family, our extended family ... our church, our Filipino grocery stores.”

Everyday, there's many of us Gen Ys made to feel guilty for staying at our parents' home. Such a feeling is perhaps unintentionally absorbed from what “informed” sources of knowledge hypotheses about us (yes, you, *Mx* newspaper). Nevertheless, perhaps the best way to understand why Gen Y (and more importantly why us Gen Y Filipinas) choose to stay home is by looking at our own experiences.

The crux of Gen Y's mystery is this: we are a product of our time and environment. We are not a phenomenon unto ourselves. In fact, we're not that great.

The most obvious reason why our cohort chooses to stay at home is because it's just geographically logical to do so. Living in a country where the population is concentrated along the coastal regions, we don't have to travel very far to go to our choice of school, university or work. Inevitably, therefore, two things distinguish life as an Australian Gen Y: suburban living and commuting.

When there's relatively reliable public transport to take you where you have to be everyday, what's the point of moving?

Which leads me to the next presumption: Gen Yers have to be financially endowed if Mum and Dad are paying for the living expenses (“at the cost of their retirement savings”, as the clever folk from *Today Tonight* would add). This myth is somewhat true – most parents choose to foot the bill over the house because they know that the fiscal activities of their Gen Y progeny revolve around the 2 C's: casual employment and Centrelink payments.

Newsflash: us Generation Y are not rich.

Most of us are fresh out of university trying to enter the wonderful world of work, only to

find there's a "No Vacancy" sign. Reality at age 23 has also not lived up to the expectations at age 13 – sure we've got that law degree, the car, the job, but we didn't expect the whopping HELP fees, increased petrol prices, and recession to boot.

So in the midst of turbulent change that all people must become accustomed to (least of all Gen Y), is it wrong to want help if it is offered? As we've learned the hard way, sometimes survival is more important than pride.

On a more philosophical note, many assume that the main purpose of "fleeing the nest" is for the Generation Y wo/man-child to finally grow up: to form their own adult identity and

become more responsible for their own actions. Perhaps these academics and TV sitcom writers are correct. Or not.

Hands up all those Gen Y readers who can say they are from a migrant background or a community group. Keep your hands up if you live at home (it's okay, nobody knows what you're reading, so your secret is safe with us).

You'd be surprised how many of us admit to being one, if not all of the above.

Most likely the reason we stay in touch with our migrant heritage or participate in the community is because we choose to live at home. We prefer to stay because this is where most of our passions lie: our family,

our extended family, our church ... our Filipino grocery stores. For us Generation Y Filipinos, being part of this community is intrinsic to how we define ourselves, both in the past and even in our present 20-something years of life. This is a way to form an identity, and a very strong one at that.

So yes, perhaps my reputation as a Filipina Gen Y precedes me. If you ask why I still live at home, you'll realise that it's a personal choice – an informed one subject to where and who I am at this point in time. My choices may seem to contradict the so-called greatness of Gen Yers, but should that turn me off my schnitzel? I think not. ●

ENTERTAINMENT

Wicked fun

A date with the Vibe team did not disappoint. MICHELLE BALTAZAR rates dinner and a night out to watch *Wicked*, the musical.

I admit it. I've been Galindafied. If you don't know what I mean, then you haven't seen one of the most thrilling and scandalous musical of all time – *Wicked*.

While the musical should be applauded for breathing fire into the otherwise boilerplate villainous character of the wicked witch of Oz (the one Dorothy killed with a pail of water in the *Wizard of Oz*), it should also be doubly complimented for introducing super-funny fabulous new words woven into the script.

Wicked begins where *Wizard of Oz* ends:

the citizens of Emerald City are "celebrifying" the death of the bad witch. But as they rejoiced, some questions were unanswered. The audience soon finds out that the girl from Kansas was merely a bit player in a bigger drama unfolding in Oz: one about the lives of Elphaba, the wicked witch, and Glinda, a.k.a. Galinda, the good witch.

Elphaba and Glinda are frenemies. Their relationship started off as one-dimensional (they hated each other) to complicated (they loved and hated each other). It is the unraveling

of their friendship, poked and prodded by the people around them, that gives the show a harder edge and more depth than your typical comedic musical.

Powerful vocal performances, superb costume and set design, and a well-crafted script: *Wicked* had it all. No wonder it won the 2010 Laurence Olivier Audience Award for 'Most Popular Show', 10 Tony Award nominations in a year (2004) and six Drama Desk Awards.

But I have to say that I walked out of the theatre thinking how charmed I was by Glinda's character, especially when she performed the song 'Popular', a key turning point where she tried to "Galindafy", or improve, the geeky Elphaba.

If you're only going to watch one musical

this year, make it *Wicked*. Some people say it's overrated (I disagree) but more than 15 award nominations can't be wrong. And you might just learn one splendid word or two.

Curve Café and Bar at the Vibe Hotel on Goulburn Street, Sydney is a great after-work spot for drinks sans the crazy Friday crowds. It's also perfect for an early dinner before a show at the Capitol Theatre since it's less than a 10-minute walk away.

I tried the starter plate of white anchovy, marinated olive and chilli flat bread with Murray river pink salt and butter (five out of five!) and for mains, I had the crispy-skinned barramundi fillet (better than the one I tried at a couple of five-star restaurants). Other guests said both the pan seared beef fillet and vegetable lasagna dishes were good, too.

So, does the Vibe Hotel and *Wicked* night out pass the "Would I take my mum, dad, brother, sister, auntie, uncle, lolo, lola and cool cousins there" test? Yes! ●

Curve Café and Bar at Vibe Hotel. Image by: Vibe

