

Written by Romeo P. Marquez
Thursday, 24 June 2010 08:00 -

One creation followed another, and another, and still another. With the way she's going, this creative entrepreneur may run out of breads to allocate and name for or after individuals who have made outstanding accomplishments. President Obama, boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, actress-singer Genesis, the two woman Presidents of the Philippines. Now, in an act of eternal gratitude, she pays tribute to an 88-year-old uncle without whose diligence and tenacity, this businesswoman and her family would not have been in the United States pursuing the American Dream. To him and his siblings, a special bread is created and named Ventura bread.

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WILMA FERNANDEZ VENTURA: AN EXPRESSION OF ETERNAL GRATITUDE

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Flash of Genius Leads to New Creations; Now, It's

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a Sunflower-Like Bread for a Loving Uncle and Aunt

By ROMEO P. MARQUEZ

TORONTO -- At her small office a few steps from the huge oven at her famous bakery, Wilma Fernandez Ventura sits relaxed on a reclining chair, smiling, and then, in another burst of genius, she rushes out of the room to the long, stainless steel-topped working table where she mixes dough with ingredients that will form her latest creation.

As she works on weighing and measuring ingredients and determining how much will go into the mixture for that perfect blend, she pauses, scoops out a teaspoon and tastes, then lets out a whisper: this is it! She then readies a whole tray for the oven.

That was a few months ago when this reporter interviewed her in San Diego, California, for a

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series of stories about her pioneering effort to establish a distinct collection of specialty breads that are named after outstanding leaders, sports and entertainment personalities in the United States and the Philippines.

For a couple of days earlier, the well-liked Wilma – as she is popularly called in San Diego's Filipino community – was in deep thought, thinking of ways she could show her respect, gratitude and admiration for the man responsible for letting her family dream the American Dream and bring it to reality.

It's been almost 30 years when her parents, Domingo Ventura and Alegria Fernandez, and their eight children, including Wilma, packed their belongings and left San Carlos City, Pangasinan, for the United States .

"Uncle Fred, my father's older brother who was in the US Navy then, had petitioned all his seven siblings and tried to bring them all to America so they could find new opportunities and improve their means of livelihood," Wilma explains.

Six of the Ventura siblings and their families managed to come to the US. Wilma's family initially settled in Guam and then moved to

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California

where she founded the celebrated The Original Richard's Bakery, named after her first-born, her only son.

Altogether, her Uncle Fred had succeeded in bringing to the US a total of 32 individuals, including his siblings' families, nephews and nieces. Over the course of three decades, they married and are now raising their own families, effectively enlarging the

Ventura

families into a clan clustered in different parts of the
US

"I'm always in awe of him," states Wilma, referring to her Uncle Fred, now 88, who lives with his very supportive wife, Auntie Verna in Connecticut. They have 12 children, four of whom Wilma met for the first time when they visited her in
an Diego

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<http://gotchajournalist.blogspot.com/> and: <http://gotchajournalist.blogspot.com/>
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She said she's been wanting to show how she could thank him for his loving and caring ways manifested by his gesture of bringing all the Venturas together under great sacrifice for him.

"The challenge was quite intimidating," admits Wilma. "But who would let it pass? To be given the chance to be in the US was already half the solution to problems. The other half was to make use of it to achieve life goals," she adds.

"Were it not for Uncle Fred and Auntie Verna, I wouldn't be here. My family wouldn't be here. Most likely, we would still be in San Carlos trying our best to survive," Wilma says.

It was this thought that pushed her to come up with a specialty bread – an eight-pointed bun, garlic-flavored, that looks like a star and sprinkled with sesame seeds. The sesame seeds give the bread the appearance of a sunflower.

Wilma names it the Ventura bread – in honor of his Uncle Fred. The eight "points" represent the Ventura siblings, according to her – "the uncles and aunts I will

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never forget", namely, James, Fred, Narciso, Leonora,
dad
Domingo, Eduardo and Jhona.

Trini

"I can't think of anything to immortalize my Uncle Fred's deeds," Wilma points out. "Creating this bread for him and his siblings is the greatest compliment that I could give him as a businesswoman and baker".

"If I had done it for President Barack Obama, boxing champion Manny Pacquiao (now a congressman), actress-singer Genesis, and others, why not my Uncle Fred who made it all happen, to begin with?" she asks.

Each of the person she mentions had specialty breads named after them – all invented by Wilma – such as the best-selling Obama Pan de Sal, the Pacquiao breads (Siete Coronas de Pacquiao, Pan de Pacquiao, Brazo de Pacquiao) and Genesis Loaf. (Video links at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QhH3Xqphs0>

and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TU8DbR5sm6E&feature=channel>

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The Ventura bread will be the latest addition to the growing list of breads, pastries and native *ka*

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(Filipino delicacies) that Wilma's creative mind has brought about in the last three years to the two-decades old Original Richard's Bakery which she owns and manages in National City, San Diego's neighbor to the south.

"My grandpa, Captain Leodegario Ventura and my grandma Rufina Ramos Ventura, are always in our hearts, and I am grateful to them as well, for without them, we won't have an uncle Fred who'd brought us here," Wilma stressed.

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