

Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

February 2003

Organic Style

By Lisa Cadiz

"My family is known for making changes in this country" was the opening remark of Mara Pardo de Tavera, MWF's January guest speaker. "I am trying to be an instrument of change for other people." By founding and running the Organic Market, Mara has nearly single handedly changed our food buying options.

The Organic Market was created to better the health and lifestyle of Filipinos (and expats!) by offering better food choices. Mara gained the background for this venture when she lived in New York and adopted a 90% organic lifestyle while running a natural foods restaurant. In 1986, Mara, pregnant and mother of two toddlers, was enticed by her family and lured with the thought of yayas, decided to return to her Manila homeland. Within the first two months Mara and her family became ill and they all contracted chicken pox. "I felt my immune system weakening and went searching for organic food,"

says Mara. "I talked with farmers in Baguio and Tagaytay. My aim was to develop a local market so I invited experts from the U.S. to teach people how to be organic."

Using her Filipino connections, in 1993 she was able to secure a spot in Greenbelt Park for the Organic Market where the market remains today. Her initial clients were expats and the items would sell out in the first two hours. Now her client base has broadened to include an organic section in the mainstream supermarket Rustan's. To build the business and educate the public about the benefits of organic food, Mara used the media. Articles were published teaching consumers and farmers about organic products.

To make certain the food and products sold at the Organic Market are 100% organic, Mara says, "I run it like a dictator." International standards for organic growing exist, however, there are currently no laws to protect organic producers in the

Philippines. Yearly visits to the farmers coupled with keen eyes and taste buds, Mara can easily detect if something isn't organic. Mara personally takes responsibility for ensuring the integrity of her food and products.

MWF members didn't have to go far to sample some of Mara's wonderful organic offerings. We were treated to organic red mountain rice pilaf, fresh carrot juice and strawberry chantilly during our dinner buffet.

An array of questions followed Mara's talk ranging from genetically modified organisms (GMOs), global

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Next MWF Meeting

When: Monday, February 17, 6:30 p.m.

What: Cyndy Tan-Jarabata will speak about the Advocates for Youth foundation, which raises awareness about teen pregnancy prevention and its consequences.

Where: Tower Club, 33rd Floor, Philamlife Tower, 8767 Paseo de Roxas (near Ayala Ave.). (You may park in the building lot by entering at the back along Valero Street, which is a one way coming from Herrera St.)

IMPORTANT: You must CONFIRM your attendance by Friday, February 14 by contacting Lisa Lumbao (0917-892-2989, lumbao@mozcom.com). Instead of bringing food, bring P600 (soft drinks and iced tea are included, others can be purchased).



Mara (right) at the Organic Market at Greenbelt

Organic (from page 1)

pollution from agrochemicals, slaughterhouse practices, agricultural practices, the history of pesticides, and milk allergens.

Mara concluded that our daily purchases and habits do make a difference. "Put your consumer vote in the right place. If you keep putting your vote in the wrong place we will drown ourselves. We are here borrowing the soil, so protect what is around us for future generations."

Where to Buy Organic Food

Place	Days	Hours
Alabang Organic Market	Thursdays	7am – 1pm
Greenbelt Organic Market (located on Legaspi St.)	Tuesdays and Fridays Saturdays	7am – 6pm 7am – 4pm
Rustan's Supermarkets in Rockwell, Glorietta, Shangri-La Plaza	Everyday	8:30am – 9pm
Terry's Selection, Pasong Tamo Extension		

The following restaurants offer limited organic items:

1. Le Souffle – Pasig
2. Via Mare
3. Raj – Malate
4. Good Earth – Greenbelt 3

Organic catering is available from Jessie Sincioco of Le Souffle - Pasig

Homeopathic Research Clinic, Tropical Palace Resort Hotel, BF Homes, Las Pinas City, cell 0918-7855476

For additional information see www.organic.ph. Note – the web site is currently under construction but is expected to be ready by mid February.

The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Penny Poole**, Programs. **Beaulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 818-2887 or 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

MWF Newsletter
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