



Kidlat Entertainment

Presents

ULAM

MAIN DISH

A film by Alexandra Cuervo

80 minutes; 1.85

Trailers:

2 minute – <https://vimeo.com/196674075>
1 minute – <https://vimeo.com/214571959>
15 second – <https://vimeo.com/214575044>

Official Selection:

2018 San Francisco International Film Festival, Launch Program – World Premiere
2018 Hawaii International Film Festival – Spring Showcase
2018 San Diego Asian Film Festival – Spring Showcase
2018 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival
2018 CAAMFest

Social Media:

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SYNOPSIS

“Could it be that Filipino food, the underdog of Asian cuisines, is having its moment at last?” — THE NEW YORK TIMES

In this delicious new documentary, Filipino-American filmmaker Alexandra Cuervo answers this question — and follows the rise of Filipino food via the award-winning chefs crossing over to the center of the American table.

ULAM: Main Dish stages this new culinary movement as not only a remarkable achievement for American restaurateurs, but also as a validation of Filipino culture. The film confronts issues inherent in representing both Filipino and American identity, and challenges from both the Filipino community and the world at large. Ultimately, ***ULAM*** is a celebration — and confirmation — that Filipino food, and Filipinos, are here to stay.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT — ALEXANDRA CUERDO

“Ulam” means main dish in tagalog, the national language of the Philippines. And this film truly strives to examine the “main dish” — not only by highlighting the hallmarks of modern Filipino cuisine, but also by telling the stories of those that create it. Through pioneering Filipino-American chefs and restaurateurs, we discuss the issues inherent in the Fil-Am crossover; also, we celebrate the newfound success of the thriving culinary community that is the Filipino food movement.

The chefs behind *ULAM: Main Dish* come from all walks of life — from Michelin-starred line cooks to high school dropouts, successful restaurateurs to first time shop owners. All are highly acclaimed by critics and customers alike, all trailblazers in the Filipino food movement. Through a series of one-on-one interviews, we delve into their histories. We ask about their families, where they're from, who they are, what made them. We look at their stories, their sacrifices and what it takes to run a successful restaurant in two of the most competitive markets in the world: New York and Los Angeles. Lastly, we ask what inspired them to pursue Filipino food, and why. For only through these personal histories, and private goals, can we determine the narrative of modern Filipino cuisine.

We seek to validate the cultural capital of Filipino food, and of Filipinos in America as a whole. Many interviews tread on deeper topics than food alone — we discuss crab mentality, the effects of colonialism, the need for support from the Filipino community. We talk about the struggles chefs have with crossing over a cuisine from a country that is largely still considered “third world.” Lastly, we watch our subjects do what they do best — create and eat incredible, delicious, beautiful food.

Ultimately, we strive to document personal stories, which inform the way we think about food in the context of our own lives. In *ULAM*, our subjects and our food are vehicles for further discussion. Food is our history, and the history of the Filipino people is complex. Filipino food and its ability to succeed is also a window into our future — and we must discuss what divides us, to find what unites us. If we are to celebrate Filipino food, and be respected as a people, we must dig deep into what makes us, and examine the future we want to create.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Alexandra Cuervo — Director/Writer/Producer

Alexandra Cuervo is a Filipino-American director, producer and editor. Her directorial debut, *ULAM: Main Dish*, has been featured in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, BuzzFeed, Vogue, TimeOut, Eater and more, with MSN ranking it as one of the “Top 5 Food Documentaries to Watch” now. As a content producer, her videos for BuzzFeed have achieved over 150 million views and over 1 million shares on Facebook. She has worked on films, television and digital content for HBO, ABC, NBC, Netflix, Hulu, Sony/Columbia Pictures, Participant Media, Walt Disney Imagineering and more. She is based in Los Angeles and New York.

ULAM: Main Dish is Cuervo’s first feature length documentary.

Website: <http://www.alexandracuervo.com/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/alexandracuervo/>

John Floresca — Producer/Cinematographer

John Floresca is a current member of the Local 600 international cinematographers guild. He has worked on TV shows such as NBC's *Third Watch*, CW's *Gossip Girl*, NBC's *Law and Order SVU*, CBS' *Elementary* and NBC's *Saturday Night Live*. John is a legendary BBQ pitmaster. His obsession with food has led him to a sought-after, treasured map of starred and marked delicious grub spots during his travels.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/johnfloresca/>

Rey Cuervo — Producer

A long-time Sony Pictures executive, Rey Cuervo began producing movies as a hobby in 2002. He produced the drama *Small Voices*, which won Best Picture in all the Philippines’ film industry awards. It was also the country’s official entry to the Oscar Awards, and it became the first Filipino film to be distributed by a major Hollywood studio (Warner Bros). In 2008, Rey executive produced *Dim Sum Funeral*, an HBO Films comedy. He was also an executive producer of the Filipino horror-comedy hit *Remington and the Curse of the Zombadings* in 2011, and secured U.S. and international distribution for it, as well as an English-language remake in development. Rey produced the award-winning *Motherland*, with its director Ramona Diaz, a Filipino documentary feature which won a Special Jury Award for Commanding Vision at the Sundance Film Festival 2017, and screened at Berlinale 2017. Currently nominated for a Spirit Award for Best Documentary, it is now available for streaming on Amazon Prime Video. At Sony, Rey opened the local-language film market in the Philippines, and is expanding it.

ABOUT THE CHEFS

Alvin Cailan — Eggslut, Unit 120, AMBOY

Chef Alvin Cailan's career began with a French classical culinary education followed by grueling stints at Matthew Lightner's Castagna, Elias Cairo's Olympic Provisions, and Thomas Keller's Bouchon and French Laundry. In 2011, he launched the Eggslut food truck in Los Angeles. Its overwhelming popularity prompted him to open Eggslut as a phenomenally successful brick and mortar at Los Angeles' Grand Central Market. It is now The Most Instagrammed Restaurant in America. Sister restaurants in Venice Beach, the Cosmopolitan Las Vegas and the Brand in Glendale, California followed.

2014's Rising Star Chef then turned his attention to his true passion: supporting aspiring restaurateurs and the promotion of the Filipino food movement. Within its first year, Unit 120, Chef Alvin's pop-up kitchen space became the incubator for Amboy, his critically acclaimed Filipino Food venture along with the award-winning Filipino restaurant LASA. In 2016 alone, Unit 120 launched three of LA Weekly and Los Angeles Magazine's Top Ten Restaurants of the Year, including Howlin' Rays, Here's Looking at You, and 71 and Above. Alvin has been featured as the ambassador for modern Filipino Cuisines in prestigious publications like Bon Appetit, Sunset Magazine, New York Times, Saveur, Food and Wine, and Bloomberg.

Chef Alvin Cailan's reputation as a culinary trailblazer has prompted Jonathan Gold, the Pulitzer prize-winning Godfather of Food Critics to crown him, "The King of LA."

Nicole Ponseca & Miguel Trinidad — Maharlika, Jeepney

A native of San Diego, Nicole Ponseca moved to New York City to pursue a career in advertising at Saatchi & Saatchi. Miguel Trinidad was born in a cab in New York City, attended culinary school at the Institute of Culinary Education and upon graduation, rose quickly to become executive chef at the Soho hotspot Lola. Along with fellow Lola alum Enzo Lim, Ponseca and Trinidad opened Maharlika in New York City's East Village in 2011 and Jeepney in 2012. The success of Maharlika pushed Ponseca and Trinidad to the forefront of Filipino cuisine in New York, garnering rave reviews from The New York Times and the Huffington Post. Jeepney would go on to receive a two-star review from Pete Wells and win TimeOut New York's "Battle of the Burger" in 2014.

Ponseca is also a motivational speaker for young Filipino adults and an active fundraiser for charities in the Philippines. She represented Filipino American leaders during the Obama administration. Trinidad has been featured on Cooking Channel, Food Network, NBC, and Fox, as well as on ABS-CBN and GMA Network, both in the Philippines.

Romy Dorotan & Amy Besa — Purple Yam

Amy Besa and her husband, Chef Romy Dorotan, have been in the restaurant business in New York City for over 20 years. They opened Cendrillon, a Filipino pan-Asian restaurant in SoHo in Manhattan in 1995, to a two-star review in the New York Times. After 13 years, they closed Cendrillon and opened Purple Yam in Ditmas Park, Brooklyn in November 2009. Purple Yam Malate, their first branch in the Philippines, opened on July 4, 2014 in Amy's childhood home in one of the oldest historical districts of Manila.

Amy and Chef Romy are co-authors of the award-winning cookbook, *Memories of Philippine Kitchens* (2006, Stewart, Tabori and Chang, NYC). The book received the Jane Grigson Award for distinguished scholarship and research and the quality of its writing by the International Association of Culinary Professionals in Chicago in 2007.

Johneric Concordia & Christine Araquel-Concordia — The Park's Finest

The Concordia Family has been mastering the art of BBQ for generations. "Big Tony" Concordia experimented with cane and pineapple, simmered with soy sauce, peppers, and spices to create a flavor that appealed to his Filipino palette. This established a recipe for the sauce that has been passed on to his sons and grandchildren. Big Tony's third son, Chef Johneric, has taken this service on the road with the very same team of families he grew up with in Echo Park. Along with his wife, Christine Araquel-Concordia, Johneric and the Bautistas, the Pajimulas and the Araquels have been instrumental in developing the recipes that are served on The Park's Finest menu today.

For years, The Park's Finest held the top spot as the #1 highest rated restaurant on Yelp in all of Los Angeles. The restaurant has been featured on the Food Network, and in various publications, including LA Weekly, EaterLA, Grub Street and more.

Charles Olalia — Ricebar

Charles Olalia is an award-winning chef, who rose to prominence as the executive chef of Patina in Los Angeles after a storied career in Michelin-starred establishments, including Restaurant Guy Savoy in Las Vegas, The French Laundry in Napa Valley and Coi in San Francisco. In 2015, Olalia left fine dining to open up the critically acclaimed Ricebar. Growing up in his native Philippines, rice served as a daily staple for Olalia. Today, chef Olalia is reinventing the rice bowl, escorting diners to Filipino cuisine with a barrage of addictive flavors. Ricebar has been named one of Bon Appetit's best new restaurants of 2016, and has been lauded as one of the best restaurants in Los Angeles in the Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly, TimeOut, GQ and more.

Chase Valencia & Chad Valencia — LASA

LASA was founded by Filipino-American brothers, Chef Chad Valencia and Chase Valencia. Both brothers have worked in the restaurant industry for over a decade. Chase worked at Wolfgang Puck Catering, where he was a Catering Sales & Operations Manager, Food & Beverage Controller, and Restaurant Manager for WPC accounts at LA Live, Sony Pictures Studios and Beats by Dre Headquarters. Chad Valencia worked at Corrina Weibel's Canele, and Brett Emerson's seasonal Spanish neighborhood restaurant, Contigo, in San Francisco. Both worked at Jessica Koslow's Sqirl, in Los Angeles.

In 2013, LASA began as a series of intimate backyard dinners. During the following two years, LASA moved to extremely popular restaurant pop-ups at the Highland Cafe in Highland Park and at the Elysian in Frogtown. In 2016, they caught the attention of Chef Alvin Cailan of Eggslut. Cailan offered the Valencia brothers a weekend residency at his Chinatown culinary incubator, Unit 120, at the Far East Plaza. After a successful year of operating 4 nights a week at Unit 120, in 2017, LASA took over the culinary incubator space to make it as their permanent home.

In 2017, after being open for less than a year, LASA skyrocketed to debut at #18 on the Los Angeles Times' Jonathan Gold's annual list of the 101 Best Restaurants in Los Angeles. LASA has been celebrated as a top restaurant by Food and Wine, EaterLA, LA Weekly and more. Recently, Forbes ranked LASA as one of the Top 10 Coolest Places to Eat in 2018.

Andre Guerrero — The Oinkster, Maximiliano, The Little Bear

Chef Andre Guerrero was born in the Philippines, and has been a chef and restaurateur in Los Angeles for over 30 years. He opened the award-winning fine dining restaurant MAX in Sherman Oaks, where he introduced Filipino lumpia on the menu. MAX received Excellent ratings in the Michelin guide, Zagat and Best Restaurant of the year for City Search and LA Magazine.

Chef Andre then opened Señor Fred, an equally successful eatery that helped cement upscale ethnic cuisine as one of Los Angeles' dining trends. Always savoring reinvention, Chef Andre charted a course for new culinary territory. The result was The Oinkster, a local favorite for classic American fare and the home of the original, annual Burger Week Competition. At The Oinkster, he also introduced the "ube shake," a Filipino-inspired milkshake served alongside American burgers. In 2011, Chef Guerrero opened Maximiliano, a neighborhood Italian restaurant in Highland Park. Then, he followed with Little Bear, an arts district cafe pouring belgian style imported and domestic beer, with a kitchen showcasing Belgian food favorites.

Today, he successfully runs The Oinkster, Maximiliano and Little Bear. He is a mentor to The Park's Finest, and many other chefs in the Los Angeles dining scene.

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR ALEXANDRA CUERDO

Interview excerpts from a conversation with BuzzFeed Philippines' editor Matt Ortile.

Q: So why do a documentary about Filipino restaurants?

Alexandra Cuervo: I think a lot about how food is a central part of our culture. I also think about representations of Filipinos in the media. And lately, I've seen plenty of Filipinos coming up in the world of restaurants. Maybe it's weird to say, but I think a chef can be a hero. I think these stories are inspirational and heroic. Speaking to all the chefs in the movie, I learned that the food world and restaurant industry is a difficult world to be in, especially in LA and New York. Restaurants open and close in six months — Filipino restaurants, specifically.

That became a real question: Why don't we see more Filipino restaurants? Growing up, I ate Filipino food almost exclusively at home. When we did go to restaurants, we'd go to West Covina, to the turo-turo places, and we'd have food that reminded us of home. But we'd never take our non-Filipino friends there. We felt we couldn't, because we felt they wouldn't understand it. But where do we have a meeting place for our culture? Where can we gather? Where can we share our culture with non-Filipinos? That's a restaurant.

“Authenticity” is a word that’s been tossed around when media talks about Filipino food — both by non-Filipinos and Filipinos.

AC: And that's a question that resonated throughout the documentary: What is authentic when it comes to Filipino food?

Nicole Ponseca, who started Maharlika and Jeepney, said in her interviews that she wanted a place where she could take clients when she used to work in advertising. She wanted a place where she could take her company, where they could just pick up the tab and have an amazing night, amazing food, amazing drinks, with servers that could educate non-Filipinos on the intricacies of each dish. That was her vision for her restaurants.

Now, any Filipino-American or Filipino can walk into either of these restaurants — and many have — and say, This doesn't look like the food that I had at home. This doesn't taste like my memories. But that's not the point. Authenticity is personal for each of these restaurants, the ones in ULAM: Main Dish, and for all their chefs. It's specific to their experience cooking and being a restaurateur in America. And it's also specific to the food they grew up with.

The Philippines is an archipelago! It's over 7,000 islands! Across the Philippines, there are many different ways of making adobo. Does that make one recipe more authentic than another? Absolutely not. There's plenty of ways to make Filipino food. In the

documentary, I put forward the idea that all those ways are valid. In the same way that there are many Italian restaurants in America, there should be many Filipino restaurants too. Every restaurant should do it their own way, in the way that is most authentic to them.

There's a lot of pressure and significance that we put on food as Filipinos.

AC: It's us. It's like saying, This is me on a plate.

It gives us a connection to fellow Filipinos and Filipino-Americans. We can say, we both enjoy this, this is some version of what we both grew up with, it's some version of ourselves — even more so when we're connecting with a non-Filipino. I can say: This is a version of me, this is a version of my history, what I grew up with, and you should try it. If you don't like it, that's OK. I have twenty other dishes for you to try.

That's the reason why I interviewed so many different kinds of chefs and restaurants. The more Filipino food you have, the more you understand it. And this film is by no means a bible to Filipino food. If anything, it's just an attempt at opening the door and saying, Here are some places you should try. Keep an open mind and see what you think. It's so difficult to explain Filipino food to somebody. You just have to eat it.

How did your experience as a Filipino-American influence your storytelling about Filipino-Americans?

AC: Personally, I grew up in Southern California, in predominantly white neighborhoods, in predominantly white schools. It wasn't until much later in life that I really wanted to explore my roots. Because when I go to the Philippines, I'm seen as American. When I'm in America, I'm seen as Filipino. I felt between two worlds. I think that's an experience a lot of the chefs in the documentary had too.

For example, Charles Olalia from Ricebar — he spent his entire career up until now making top-of-the-line French food. He's worked at places like French Laundry and the Ritz. And for his first restaurant, he wanted to go back to his roots. He was born and raised in the Philippines, but he could have come out the gate and made a French restaurant. It would have been so great. Instead, he pulled together his time, his resources, his energy to do something that felt like home to him.

I think that's really what it comes down to at the end of the day for me too, why I made this documentary. It was me trying to connect with home. In a big way, I think that Filipino food *is* America. It has been for me. I think it will be for many future generations. If I had an ultimate vision for Filipino food, it's that it would become as woven into the American experience as Filipinos are.

MEDIA COVERAGE

BuzzFeed: This Film About Filipino Restaurants Will Leave You Hungry For More

Quote: “ULAM: Main Dish's director and producer Alexandra Cuerdo ... sat down with [BuzzFeed Philippines](#) to talk about the film, how Filipinos use food as a means of communication to share themselves with others, and a new definition for what's considered to be "authentic" Filipino food.”

Link:

https://www.buzzfeed.com/mattortile/ulam-main-dish-documentary?utm_term=.jyY2NjWgJy#.ohZv3x1mW6

The New York Times: Filipino Food Finds A Place In The American Mainstream

Quote: ““Sinigang is what my mother would make for me when I was sick,” said Alexandra Cuerdo, the director of the documentary “[Ulam: Main Dish](#),” about the rise of Filipino food in America, which is set to premiere at the San Francisco International Film Festival next month.

Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/12/dining/filipino-cooking.html>

MSN: 5 Food Documentaries That Will Change How You See Food

Quote: “Ulam (Main Dish) is a new documentary about the rise of Filipino cuisine in America. The film profiles the innovative chefs and restaurateurs behind the rise of the Filipino food movement and documents the hurdles they faced bringing the cuisine of the Philippines to main-stage American dining.”

Link:

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/foodanddrink/foodnews/5-food-documentaries-that-will-change-how-you-see-food/ss-BBAYbis?li=BBoPRmz#image=1>

Vogue: How Filipino Food Is Becoming The Next Great American Cuisine

Quote: “The city also recently hosted a screening of the new film Ulam, a meditation on Filipino cooking in America, as part of Los Angeles Times food critic Jonathan Gold’s Food Bowl food festival.”

Link: <http://www.vogue.com/article/filipino-food-philippines-cuisine-restaurants>

Los Angeles Times: Jonathan Gold says the time for Filipino cuisine is now, and the place is Los Angeles

Quote: “The new film “Ulam,” Alexandra Cuerdo’s love letter to Filipino cooking in America, shows at the Million Dollar Theatre this Saturday as part of the L.A. Times Food Bowl. ”

Link: <http://www.latimes.com/food/la-fo-filipino-cuisine-20170511-story.html>

Filmmaker Magazine: SFFILM Announces Its Launch Program’s 2018 All-Doc Slate

Quote: “For lovers of food documentaries like Jiro Dreams of Sushi (2011) and the Chef’s Table series, Ulam: Main Dish will come as a welcome and fresh addition. The film centers on the honest struggle for authenticity and respect for a cuisine often marginalized by the food world.”

Link:

<https://filmmakermagazine.com/104995-sffilm-announces-its-launch-programs-2018-all-doc-slate/>

Eater SD: Local Chefs To Cook Epic Filipino Feast

Quote: “It took long enough, but it looks like Filipino food is finally having its moment in the culinary spotlight. A new documentary called “[Ulam: Main Dish](#),” which explores modern Filipino cuisine and the chefs behind it, will be screened on Monday, April 23 as part of the programming for the [8th Annual San Diego Asian Film Festival \(SDAFF\)](#) Spring Showcase presented by local non profit organization Pacific Arts Movement (Pac Arts).”

Link:

<https://sandiego.eater.com/2018/3/22/17153256/ulam-film-kamay-an-dinner-pac-arts-san-diego>

Eater LA: This New Filipino Food Documentary Looks Awesome

Quote: “And as if on cue, here comes what looks to be [a pretty awesome documentary](#) about it all. Called ULAM, which apparently means “main dish,” the film jumps from Unit 120 to restaurant kitchens across the country to discuss the tricky, sticky issue of growing a cultural culinary food movement, one restaurant at a time.”

Link:

<http://la.eater.com/2017/1/20/14308338/morning-briefing-restaurant-news-los-angeles-filipino-documentary>

Asian Journal (Cover Story): LA, NYC Fil-Am chefs at the heart of ‘ULAM’

Quote: ““This documentary is awesome because it stops at a moment right now of where

we can take it next. It's just pointing out the fact that we're going to push our food and we're going to do it together.””

Link:

<http://asianjournal.com/aj-magazines/la-nyc-fil-am-chefs-at-the-heart-of-ulam%E2%80%AF/>

TimeOut LA: Watch 'ULAM,' a documentary about Filipino food, presented by Grand Central Market and AMBOY

Quote: “The documentary, directed by Alexandra Cuerdo, explores "the rise of the Filipino food movement via the chefs crossing over to the center of the American table."...This year may finally be the year Filipino food truly breaks through the mainstream.”

Link:

<https://www.timeout.com/los-angeles/blog/watch-ulam-a-documentary-about-filipino-food-presented-by-grand-central-market-and-amboy-040317>

Inquirer.net: 'Ulam' film on Fil-Am chefs, food scene to screen at LA Times Food Bowl

Quote: ““All these chefs are incredible,” says Cuerdo, who was born and raised in Orange County, California. “I’m their number one, biggest fan. It’s been such a pleasure to tell their stories and taste their food—which is absolutely amazing.”

Link:

<http://usa.inquirer.net/2731/ulam-film-fil-chefs-food-scene-screen-la-times-food-bowl>

LAist: Weekend Planner: 20 Of The Coolest Things To Do In Los Angeles

Quote: “[ULAM \(Main Course\)](#), directed by Alexandra Cuerdo, documents the rise of the Filipino food trend through conversations with chefs at the center of the movement.”

Link: http://laist.com/2017/05/18/weekend_planner_051817.php

Los Angeles Times: Documentary features Valencia brothers from Lasa restaurant

Quote: “The Valencia brothers are featured in the documentary 'ULAM', which will preview at the Los Angeles Times Food Bowl on May 20. ...The chefs will [discuss](#) the film with The Times' Jonathan Gold following the screening.”

Link:

<http://www.latimes.com/food/la-food-bowl-updates-documentary-features-valencia-brothers-1495128107-htmlstory.html>

CREDITS

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MAIN DISH**

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VIOLIN 3 - JOYCE KWAK

VIOLIN 4 - MARIKO DE NAPOLI

VIOLIN 5 - ANJI LOPEZ-ROSENDE

VIOLIN 6 - NELLIE PONARUL

VIOLA 1 - MORGAN OSHAUGHNESSEY

VIOLA 2 - JULIEN ALTMANN
VIOLA 3 - REBECCA BACICH
CELLO 1 - KILLIAN KELLY
CELLO 2 - CALEB YANG
DOUBLE BASS 1 - MARK GUTIERREZ
DOUBLE BASS 2 - JULES LEVY

BRASS

TRUMPET AND FLUGELHORN - SARA SITHI-AMNUAI
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IMMANUEL SMITH
JULMAN TOLENTINO
ARTHUR RODRIGUEZ
MATT KOPEC

EGGSLUT, UNIT 120, MAHARLIKA, JEEPNEY, PURPLE YAM, THE PARK'S FINEST,
RICEBAR, LASA, THE OINKSTER, MAXIMILIANO, LITTLE BEAR, CREME CARAMEL,
WHITE STAR, GRAND CENTRAL MARKET, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES