

15 MINUTES

Taste of home

Joining Butte County's fleet of mobile eateries, Lola's Filipino Cuisine was opened in January by Jasmine Suarez and her fiancé, Lehi Gange. Suarez tackles the marketing side of the operation and Gange is a food-industry veteran who also works at Japanese Blossoms in Chico. Gange had a vision of opening a Filipino food truck to share his mom's recipes and his family's culinary heritage with the community. Lola's offers a handful of entrees, including soy-marinated, thin-sliced beef tapa; pork longanisa sausages; and the national dish of the Philippines, chicken adobo—a flavorful vinegar-braised dish that's sweet, sour and salty. They also hand-roll lumpia, aka Filipino egg rolls. Based in Oroville, the food truck travels throughout the county. Find upcoming locations and times at facebook.com/lolasfilipinocuisine1418 or @lolasfilipinocuisine on Instagram. The CN&R recently caught up with Suarez outside of The Commons Social Emporium to find out more.

Who is Lola?

Lola is my fiancé's mom. Lola means grandmother in Tagalog. She's a tough critic, too. She'll let us know if we get her recipe wrong and give us approval when our flavors are good to go. She approves.

What is your signature dish and what would you recommend for someone who has never tried Filipino food before?

You can't go wrong with our lumpia. It's the one thing I always tell people if they're a little hesitant to give our food a try. I also recommend our chicken adobo. It's a staple in the Filipino community. My favorite item would be our chicken cheese lumpia. It's my go-to. I would go crazy whenever Lola would make lumpia, and I actually told her a couple days ago, "You know, I used to get so excited for your lumpia, but now I'm rolling it every single week and I'm getting kinda tired of it!" But the taste ... I love it.

You also offer pre-packaged food that people can cook at home. Tell me about that.

Yes, we sell frozen lumpias by the dozen, which is an



PHOTO BY NATE DALY

option for people that don't have time to eat out or would prefer to cook themselves. You just heat up a little bit of oil and pan fry all sides of the egg roll until they are brown and crispy.

What have been the most rewarding and difficult aspects of operating a food truck?

Probably battling time. Time management is stressful, but it's also the most fun for me because I like meeting deadlines. Needing to have stuff done in time for an event and getting it accomplished is rewarding. As far as difficulties, it has been a little bit of a challenge to find good places to park the truck, besides the breweries that have given us an opportunity. It's been hard to get permission from businesses and find ideal locations for serving lunch, but we're working on it.

What future plans do you have for Lola's?

We'd like to open up a small family restaurant to serve traditional kamayan dinners laid out on banana leaves, with food in the middle. People come in, eat with their hands and share a meal. That's definitely the goal.

—NATE DALY

THE GOODS

Revving up for summer



by
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Every year around this time, Chicoans inexplicably start complaining about the heat—as if we've never experienced it before. All of a sudden, I'm seeing farmers tans from people over-exposing their winter-pale arms and legs. It's time to break out the sunscreen and mosquito repellant, folks—this is the nicest it's going to be pretty much all year. And with these clear skies comes a never-ending schedule of fun.

Thursday Night Market is now in full swing. And there's **Fork in the Road** every third Wednesday at DeGarmo Park. **Friday Night Concerts** at the City Plaza are starting up this week (May 3) and Oroville celebrates **First Fridays** at downtown businesses.

Given these springtime conditions, **Cycle Gear** chose the perfect season to open up a new shop in Chico. It couldn't be more appropriately placed, either, conveniently off Highway 99 on South Whitman Place, a few doors down from the **Tackle Box Bar & Grill**. Cycle Gear was opened in 1974 in Richmond and now has stores all over the U.S. It specializes in motorcycles and the associated gear. Find 'em on Facebook for store hours and special event info—their first bike night looked like a blast!

NEW FOODIES A couple new mobile food businesses opened up over the past few months in the Chico area. The first one I came across was **The Hot Box**, as I saw it was feeding folks at Cycle Gear's grand opening on March 30. It appears to still be in its beginning stages, as its web presence is pretty minimal at this time, but from what I can tell, it's a hot dog cart that offers an eclectic variety of toppings. Find it on Facebook @thbfoodcart.

I also came across **Pizza Riot**, as it's joined the rotating cast of food trucks at **The Commons Social Emporium**. The pizzas look pretty delicious in the photos I scrolled through and—get this—they're 100 percent vegan. Pizza Riot's motto is, "plant-based, organic and non-GMO." Pretty cool. On Facebook @veganpizzariot.

Also check out this week's 15 Minutes feature on **Lola's Filipino Cuisine**, based in Oroville.

SPEAKING OF FILIPINO FOOD I'm a little bit bummed to report that from here on out, satisfying my craving for **Inday's Filipino Restaurant's** pork adobo and mango smoothies will be relegated to weekends. Owners **John and Inday Geiger** announced last week that they have decided to scale back in order to spend more time with their kids. I can't blame them—between running a restaurant and a mobile kitchen and organizing the Fork in the Road food truck rallies, the Geigers are awfully busy.

Generally speaking, you can find the Inday's cart at Thursday Night Market, while the brick-and-mortar is open Friday-Sunday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Check Facebook for schedule updates—this Saturday and Sunday, for instance (May 4-5), they'll be at **Sierra Nevada's Beer Camp** instead of at their West Eighth Street eatery.

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