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**Title:** 7 local food picks at World Street Food Congress

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**Author:** Joko Magalong

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MANILA - The World Street Food Congress' Jamboree is underway at its new location in the Mall of Asia Concert Grounds.

Running until June 4, the WSFC finds its groove this time around in a more spacious venue, a better system, and now, even nighttime entertainment.

P150 gets you a ticket in as well as a corresponding voucher that you can use in any of the 32 hawker stalls that sell one to two dishes.

The lines are manageable, you've got order takers and cashiers at every stall, and tables to eat your grub span almost all of the venue. That's easily twice as big as last year, also sans dust.

On the food side of things, the Philippines is well-represented this year with stalls from the country's culinary capitals.

From the President's favorite dish to more imaginative takes to local favorites, here's a rundown of our top picks in this year's WSFC.

### **1. SITTI TAUSUG**

This Tausug-style grilled chicken is best eaten hot. Ask nicely to get more of that luscious blackened coconut sauce to drizzle over your spicy rice, chicken, and that boiled egg.

### **2. PORK MONGGO**

Said to be the President's favorite dish in Davao, this is Pork Monggo done right, thick and rich with all the classic accompaniments: squash, string beans (sitaw) and malunggay.

It's the pork trotter with meat that falls off the bone that makes this dish worth trying, lest you scoff at it being "just monggo." It is served by a sweet lady that smiles as she gives you a plate.

A serving can feed two to three people, and if you're visiting and have never had monggo, this is a great introduction to this comfort dish.

### **3. BICOL EXPRESS RISOTTO**

This dish from Chef Andres Nacion consists of creamy, plumped up flavorful rice tinged with unapologetic heat with tender morsels of pork and topped with chicharon.

This is a dish that just makes sense. If you want spicy Filipino food, this is for you.

#### **4. SISIG PAELLA**

From Café Fleur and his newly opened 25 Seeds, Chef Sau Del Rosario (who also co-moderates the WSFC dialogue) offers up the Sisig Paella.

Pork cheeks and belly are kissed by the grill, flavored with classic sizzling sisig accretions (liver, soy sauce, lime, chilli) and mixed with pan-roasted rice. They've saved you the effort of mixing, and there's also the soccarat part of the equation that makes eating this dish divine.

Sau also offers up a Kare-Kare Palabok, which could easily be our country's answer to peanut noodles. Just a tip: ask for more bagoong.

#### **5. CHICKEN INASAL IN COCONUT PITA BREAD**

Chef JP Anglo of Sarsa shows you what he does best with a pita pocket like no other. His version is filled with chicken pieces cooked inasal-style (which also includes pieces of his infamous crispy chicken isaw), held together with a garlic sauce that makes it extra creamy.

Balancing out all this richness only takes a drizzle of Spicy Langka Liver Dip which is punchy, sour and piquant. It is another one of those sauces that Anglo should bottle and sell.

#### **6. LA PAZ BATCHOY**

Never been to Iloilo? Take a sip of this authentic La Paz Batchoy from chef Rafael Jardeleza II.

The garlicky broth, chewy noodles, liver pieces and chicharon bits make this an accessible take on a classic Filipino comfort dish.

#### **7. ILOCOS TREATS**

The Ilocos stall has all the group favorites – a knarly pinakbet pizza, and a meat-packed longganisa and bagnet pizza.

But as one of the cheapest things in the WSFC jamboree at only P150 pesos per piece, the Cheese Empanada is a sure-fire bestseller. It has papaya, egg, minced Ilocos longganisa meat, and cheese, all in its trademark fried crispy pastry shell. Add vinegar to your heart's delight and enjoy.