



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINE CONSULATE GENERAL  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



Press Release  
AASC-092-2020

## Philippine Chocolate Queen in Global Access Program 2020

**Global Access Program**  
REGISTRATION: <http://bit.ly/GlobalAccessProgram>

**Singapore | South Korea | Philippines**  
*2020-21 Virtual Business Matchmaking & Education Series*  
FOCUS ON AGRICULTURE & FOOD PRODUCTS/SERVICES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

**Session #3**  
**Nov. 19, 2020**  
**5:30 - 7 p.m. PST**

**Business Conversation**  
Moderated by Dr. Sarika Jackson  
Chair, President & CEO,  
Global Research Institute of  
International Trade

**Keynote Speaker**  
Rafaelina Katon, DSc., Sustainability  
Practitioner, Leticia Institute

**Special Guests**  
Raquel Toquero-Choa  
President & Founder,  
The Chocolate Chamber (TCC)

**Panelists**  
Gloria San  
Consult & Customer Attaché  
Korean Consulate General, Los Angeles

**Topics to be discussed**  
• Import/Export Procedures  
• How to get the 2021 Reciprocity  
Company Program (RCP)



(Photo right: PHL “Chocolate Queen” Raquel Toquero-Choa with her daughter, PHL “Chocolate Princess,” Hannah Mae Toquero. Photo taken during the livestream discussion.)

27 November 2020, Los Angeles – The Philippine Consulate General in Los Angeles participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the 2020 Global Access Program webinar series dubbed, “2020-21 Virtual Business Matchmaking and Education Series,” featuring agriculture and food products of the Philippines, Singapore and Korea.

During the panel discussion on the Philippines, spotlight was given to the Philippine cacao industry through the presentation of the Philippine “Chocolate Queen,” Raquel Toquero-Choa. Ms. Toquero-Choa founded the famous Cebu-based chocolate boutique called The Chocolate Chamber (TCC) Boutique by Ralfe Gourmet, Inc. (RGI) TCC was inspired by the company’s first dining outlets, Casa de Cacao, formerly Ralfe Gourmet Tavern, which opened in 2011 and The Chocolate Chamber, in 2013.

Cebu is home to the rare cacao variety known as *criollo*, known for its superior quality and rich texture. Commonly called “cacao bisaya” in the Philippines, it is the secret to the bittersweet aromatic taste of the country’s top-notch chocolate brands.

The increasing demand for Ms. Toquero-Choa’s unique 100% cacao-based confections and the brand’s rising popularity among locals earned her the title of Philippine Chocolate Queen.

In her presentation, Ms. Toquero-Choa recalled her childhood memories of growing up in the mountains, where she learned the tricks of making *tablea* (tablets of ground cacao beans) and imbibed the chocolate tradition of her family. Like in any Filipino family, their

traditional breakfast included chocolate as served as a “*sikwate*” or hot chocolate drink and “*chamorado*” or rice-based porridge with chocolate.

In the Philippines, every Filipino family has their own chocolate heirloom recipes, which over the years, have given rise to many award-winning Filipino chocolatiers, the likes of Theo and Philo, Malagos and Auro, who joined the ranks of world-renowned chocolate brands. Notably, the Philippine cacao beans grown by Puentespina Farms located in Davao in Southern Philippines were designated as Heirloom Cacao by the United States-based Heirloom Cacao Preservation Fund. The Philippines is the only second country in Asia to join the exclusive roster.

Similarly, RGI has been producing world-class chocolates since its founding in 2010. In 2015, its truffle chocolates were given as official tokens to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperative (APEC) participants, and in 2016, it participated in an international chocolate tasting fair entitled, “*Le Salon du Chocolat*” organized by the Arab Ladies Club to the United Nations and the U.N. African Ambassadors Spouses Group in New York. More recently, the family opened another brand outlet called “*Batirol*” at the TCC to highlight the distinct Philippine tradition of *sikwate*-making, that is, from tablea and through the use of a hand-held wooden “*batirol*” in whisking the chocolate drink.

RGI is one of the fully-integrated chocolate maker companies in the Philippines with their own cacao plantation farm, production facility and retail outlets in Cebu. With the full backing of the Philippine Government, which Ms. Toquero-Choa considers part of her success, RGI aims to conquer the international market as a Philippine brand and plans to launch its presence in the United States in 2021.

The Philippines’ chocolate tradition can be traced back to 1670 when the first cacao in Asia was planted on Philippine soil giving rise to the development of commercial farms in the 1950s. The country enjoys a competitive advantage in cacao production with its strategic location and a climate perfect to growing cacao. Aside from criollo, forastero and trinitario cultivars are also grown in the country.

This year’s GAP is jointly organized by the Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration of the California State University-San Bernardino, GRIIT, U.S. Small Business Administration Orange County/IE District Office, the Philippine Consulate General, the Korean Orange County Chamber of Commerce, and Enterprise Singapore, as well as Planet63 and Brandwood CKC.

This year’s GAP organizing team included the Philippine Consulate General’s economic diplomacy team namely Consul Rea G. Oreta, Trade Attaché Eric C. Elnar, Information Officer Mary Grace D. Leano and the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C.’s Agricultural Attaché Josyline Javelosa.

The webinar could still be viewed through [https://fb.watch/1\\_H3miFON/](https://fb.watch/1_H3miFON/). END.