



PIZZA DE ALICIA

The uplifting story of Mohammad Ali “Rap” Sangkula

2021 Kabuhayan Awards National Winner for Individual Category

When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade, as suggested by a famous quote. But, in the case of Mohammad Ali Sangkula, a young entrepreneur from Alicia, Zamboanga Sibugay, it was snacks and pizza.

It all started during Ramadan, as told by Mohammad’s mother, Virginia. It was on the last day of the 29-day fast that they found themselves with nothing to eat. As a mother, it was heartbreaking for her to see her son with no food to break their fast. She then kneaded some flour and put together ingredients that are readily available, which came as a surprise to her family that she was able to make a pizza.

Mohammad, fondly called as Rap by people close to him, started to learn about business at such a young age. He used to help his mother in her snack vending machine by delivering snacks to neighboring villages.

“In 1994, when I was just 12 years old, I started helping my parents. Then, in college, I started my own business where I cook my products, then I deliver it to school canteens,” Rap shared.



Mohammad Ali Sangkula

He used his income from his small business to pay for his school needs until he graduated with a degree in Elementary Education in 2015.

“It was my mother who started making pizza. When I got married, I became serious on the pizza business.” he added.



Rap and his wife worked together on their pizza business, making small pizzas sold for ₱5.00 each. They were able to make 40 pizzas per day using just a small frying pan and firewood.

They would start kneading and baking the dough, as well as preparing the ingredients at eight in the evening until six in the morning the following day.

The dedication and skills that they put on the products they are selling are truly remarkable.

This also goes to show that they are not only offering street foods, but also their hearts and efforts to the hundreds of customers they are serving.

In 2017, Ms. Judith Tilog, PESO Manager of the Local Government Unit of Alicia, saw Rap delivering food products in their office.



It was at this time that Rap was told about the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP).



Judith Tolog, PESO Manager

“While he is telling his story about his business, I appreciated his attitude and mindset as a worker of the informal sector,” added Ms. Tolog.

On the same year, Rap received an assistance from the DOLE through the DILP worth ₱10,370.00. The said fund was used to buy baking and pastry equipment, which consist of a microwave oven, dough mixer, cupcake mold, measuring cups, whisk, and measuring spoons. Because of this, his daily income increased from ₱300.00 to ₱1,000.00 daily.

“After receiving the starter kit from the DOLE, work became easier. We were able to catch up on our delivery services. Cooking was not stressful anymore. Our income increased and we were able to save,” Rap said.

In 2018, he started improving his business, opening up a small stand in front of his house, upgraded his equipment to cater more orders, while starting a social media page to market his products and reach more customers. More than that, he also changed their packaging from paper plates to box boards in serving their pizzas.



Aside from pizza, he added other food items like mi goreng, batchoy and halo-halo to the menu.

Their income gradually increased as they bolstered up their livelihood. “From August to December 2019, our income was good. We were able to save up and purchased a scooter, which we use to go to the market.” he added.

The demand for their food products soared, they hired four assistants, including Rap’s brother, to run for deliveries, which immensely helped them on daily operations.

“Aside from our daily wage, our meals are free, and we have a take home food for our children,” said Summer Alpa Tungayao, an on-call store assistant. Rap also helped him in his livelihood by providing a capital in his pastil (Tausug empanada) business, and taught him how to make a sauce for the pastil.

Aside from these ventures, Rap never forgets his roots. He teaches Arabic and Islamic values every Friday, and an active leader of the Alicia Islamic Youth Organization. He mentors the youth in halal-based businesses to augment their income, and to prevent them from drug use and terrorism, and maintain peace in their community.

The business was also badly affected by the pandemic. Rap has to close down the store due to the lockdown. But, in August 2020, in time for the Alicia town’s fiesta, and a meager ₱500.00 capital, they

reopened their food business. Despite the odds, they saw an increased income, which allowed them to open another branch, and provide social protection for himself and his employees.

Through the DOLE’s assistance, people like Rap, were able to turn their lives around. From someone who has nothing to eat during a break in Ramadan, to someone who provides food or livelihood not just for himself but also for his family and the people around him, truly, Rap’s story is an uplifting one.

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