**Eat along with Jenni!**

Dramaturg Matthew Hartman shares recipes and insights about the Filipino foods Jenni eats throughout *Halo Halo*.

Shrimp Chips

 Shrimp chips are (relatively) weird. Chips made out of ground shrimp, cuttlefish, tapioca flour, onion, garlic, sugar, fish sauce, and more msg than is probably healthy might be new to some people. However, and I cannot stress this enough, everyone should try them. If you like seafood and chips, try them. Even if you do not like seafood or chips, try them, because there is no chance you do not like umami. Shrimp chips are little bombs of umami that disintegrate as you bite them. The slight fishy scent as you open the bag is quickly forgotten as soon as that first bite comes. Then all you’re left with is the mouth-watering taste of the sea produced by Asia. My personal favorites are the yuzu/black pepper shrimp chips. The slight bit of acid and bitterness makes the flavor of the chip that much more intense. We’re all in America anyways, who could say no to msg here?

Lumpia Shanghai

 I do not know why lumpia are so good but they are. Spring rolls start to blend together at some point for me having eaten them in several varieties across several countries, but lumpia are just different. Comparatively they have less spice than spring rolls from countries like Laos or Thailand and less of a history than countries like China where the dish has some origins but they are so, so, inexplicably good. Just some meat, a few things for seasoning, and a good eye for frying and you meet some of the most lovable fried bites that can be made in your average home kitchen.

* 1 lbs each ground pork & ground beef
* 1 white onion, minced
* 1-2 carrots, depending on size, minced
* ¼ cup green onion, minced
* 1 egg, beaten
* ¼ cup soy sauce
* 3 tsp black pepper
* 2 tbsp garlic powder
* 2 tbsp salt
* Store bought spring roll wraps
* Oil with a high smoke point for frying the lumpia
1. Combine beef and pork in a bowl, mix by hand until they are thoroughly combined.
2. Add onion, carrot, and green onion and mix until incorporated.
3. Evenly add soy sauce, black pepper, garlic powder, and salt and mix until incorporated.
4. Fry a bit of the filling and taste, adjust seasoning however you want.
5. To roll the lumpia, I find that it helps to separate the wrappers in advance; cover with a damp paper towel to prevent from drying out. Take the wrapper and place it on your work surface on a diagonal so one point is facing you. Place about 1 tablespoon of filling towards the bottom of the egg roll. Turn up the bottom corner and roll upwards. Fold in the left and right corners, making sure the filling is nicely packed, with no air pockets. Continue rolling. Dip you finger in water, pat it on the remaining corner and finish rolling the lumpia, sealing the edge.
6. Heat oil in a cast iron pot or deep fryer to 350 degrees. Fry lumpia until golden brown, roughly 4-5 minutes.
7. Let lumpia sit on a rack above a baking sheet or plate with paper towels on it to drain some excess oil.
8. Serve with sweet chili sauce or whatever sauce you may prefer.

Pork Belly Adobo

 Adobo is a quintessential Filipino dish. It is an unofficial dish of the country that comes in many forms. From the soy and vinegar based stew below to the sa Gata recipe finished with coconut milk and chilies, it is a dish any Filipino person is familiar with. While it is a fairly simple dish to make, adobo contains almost the entirety of Filipino history within it. It is the synthesis of the influence from mainland Asia in its flavor profiles, the inescapable history of Spanish colonialism in its spices and the solace that the islands of the Philippines have brought to its people from these things. It is a comfort dish for many. There are not many plates that so unanimously allow eaters to get lost in each bite the way adobo does. We all have some dishes that leave us with that feeling of real warmth, those plates that are filled with relaxation and nostalgia. Sunday gravy and ochazuke are great, I do not mean to disparage them. But Adobo is different. Adobo feels like home.

* 2 lbs pork belly cut into 2-3 inch size pieces
* 2 cups vinegar (white, apple cider, or coconut)
* 2 cups soy sauce
* 10 cloves garlic (chopped)
* 4 bay leaves
* 1-1.5 cups water
* 1 small handful of black peppercorns (about a tbsp)
* 1 tsp of sugar (preferably brown)
1. In a cast iron pot, dutch oven, or heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat, sear the pork belly. Place it fat cap down in the pan to render out some fat. Turn until all sides of each piece have some color.
2. Remove pork belly from the pot, turn heat to high, and deglaze the pot with the vinegar, scraping the bottom with something like a wooden spoon or tongs to kick up all of the fond.
3. Add soy sauce, garlic, bay leaves, water, and the pork belly to the pot.
4. Bring to a boil, then turn heat down to low and simmer.
5. Add sugar and give the pot a stir.
6. When the meat is fork tender, it is done.
7. Serve with white rice.

Optional steps and thoughts

While many people will marinate the meat before cooking adobo, I prefer to leave it unmarinated. Soy sauce and vinegar will break down myosin (protein in the meat) and while this leads to a tender bite, it loses shape and texture. Leaving the meat unmarinated and removing from heat when it is tender will allow the meat to maintain some of its bite and prevent it from falling apart before it can be served.

 Some steps I take when I make adobo to tweak the flavor are as follows:

1. Add rice wine vinegar in with the braising liquid (substitute one quarter of the vinegar for rice wine vinegar). This brings out some of the subtle notes in the spices.
2. Add a splash of shaoxing rice wine or mirin into the braising liquid. This helps to flesh out the sweeter notes of your protein.
3. Swap black peppercorns for a mix of black, white, pink, and green peppercorns to make a more aromatic braising liquid.
4. Toast the peppercorns and grind them before adding to the pot to diffuse more of their flavor into the liquid. This works particularly well with a variety of peppercorns as it fleshes out the aroma of each type.
5. This one might seem strange but add a sheet of kombu to the braising liquid when the pork is reintroduced to the pot. The glutamic acid of kombu and inosinic acid in the meat will intensify the umami in the dish.

Halo Halo

 Halo Halo is a dessert. I do not think there are a lot of things that embody that word as well as halo halo. Desserts now come with all manner of garnishes and flavors from bitter to salty but that is not what a dessert is at its core. In the most pure sense of the word, dessert is sweet. It is satisfying. Halo halo is just this. A mixture of toppings such as jellies like nata de coco, fruit like jackfruit and coconut, red bean, and flan sit below and above shaved ice topped with evaporated milk and ube ice cream is a dessert in the truest sense of the word. It's a sundae but better. It is a mix of textures that changes with each bite as your spoon starts to hit different parts of the bottom of the dish. It changes constantly. One minute it is nothing but chewiness and the sweetness of candy and cream, the next it is a harsh bite of ice and flan dancing around one another. Halo halo makes you happy. It fills some part of your soul that was missing. It overwhelms you by putting so many ingredients at the forefront that they, while distinct, become inseparable. All these little pieces become lost in one dish to create something far better than what they were before. That is halo halo.