



WITH THE RIGHT MINDSET
Rosario Amoroto proved that no matter how many times you fall, there's no other way but to stand up again. She had an idea and held on to that.

The Sweet Side of Calamansi

Island's Best Foods

A midwife, appalled by the sight of rotting calamansi fruits on Homonhon Island due to lack of buyers, has ventured into the production of juice and concentrates and built a thriving business in the process.

Who would have thought that the Island's Best Foods' calamansi juice and concentrates emerged from a mere Pnp 500 capital in 2009?

The company, which is now making Pnp 400,000 monthly, is owned by midwife Rosario G. Amoroto, who lacked any background in business other than having been a member of a failed livelihood cooperative on Eastern Samar's Homonhon Island, which is located on the eastern side of the Leyte Gulf facing the Pacific Ocean.

Rosario used to lament seeing the fruits of the abundant calamansi plants on the island mostly going to waste for lack of takers, thus depressing prices to the detriment of the farmers.

Like Rosario, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) was aware of the situation and thought of processing the calamansi fruit into a juice as a solution. The processing will lengthen the shelf life of the product and give it enough time to reach consumers beyond the island's very limited market.



DID YOU KNOW?
Calamansi is loaded with vitamins and minerals that protect someone from catching a cold or flu.

? Juicing the Calamansi

- 1 After harvesting the calamansi fruits for processing, begin sorting and discarding the overripe fruits.
- 2 Wash the fruits using mildly-chlorinated water. Then, start extraction—remove the seeds and squeeze out the juice.
- 3 Following pasteurization (add sugar and boil) is cooling and transferring—pour into the tank with dispenser.
- 4 Packaging—bottling and labeling.



FROM ZERO TO HERO

It all started with a small idea to capitalize on the surplus of calamansi. Now, that idea has become a very successful business that helps not only Rosario, but also her community. They produce calamansi concentrate, calamansi juice, and calamansi jelly.

At that time, commercial production and sale of calamansi juice and concentrates were not yet popular.

Nonetheless, the DTI, along with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), conducted on the island a three-day livelihood training, which Rosario could not and would not miss.

"I never missed any seminars or trainings," Rosario says of the vast knowledge she has gained—from starting a business to product development and even packaging.

Rosario promptly went into business with all of the Php 500 that she had. She used small pots to cook batches of sweetened

calamansi extract at the back of her house after her work as a midwife, and gave some to friends and family members for their feedback.

After two years of this tedious routine, she received an order for 1,000 liters from the governor, who would give them as gifts to friends in the province and in Manila.

"Before, we had no [captive] market. We were just giving away free samples," Rosario recalls.

Then DTI invited her to join its sponsored trade shows, including those in Metro Manila.

LIFE IS NOW EASIER

After two strenuous years of just working in her backyard, Rosario finally found a breakthrough. She sought assistance from DTI, and it helped her business to bloom. After working by herself, she now has employees and equipment that make production easier.



THE SPITE OF TYPHOON YOLANDA

Things were going great when her coastal town of Guiuan in mainland Eastern Samar was hit by super typhoon Yolanda. Everything she had built over the past four years was swept away in the morning of November 8, 2013.

"Our equipment and our production area [factory building] were all gone," she laments.

That included the raw materials from Homonhon Island, but not Rosario's indomitable spirit. She took out a special-term loan of Php 340,000 to resurrect her business.

With the assistance of DTI, and other government and civic organizations, her family business was able to avail the Enterprise Rehabilitation Facility for Yolanda-affected micro, small, and medium enterprises.

Before long, she was back in business, selling to institutional and walk-in buyers at the 2015 BAHANDI regional trade fair, where she topped the processed food category with her booked orders worth a whopping Php 2.5 million.

SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE COMMUNITY

"The farmers whom we get our calamansi from, tell us of their children finishing their schooling and being able to buy their needs. It's very fulfilling," says Rosario of the social impact of her business, which continues to contribute to the economic recovery of the Homonhon Island, the town of Guiuan, and the rest of the province.

HOW DTI HELPED

Before putting up her calamansi juice business, Rosario Amoroso attended multiple seminars provided by DTI—from starting a business to product development and packaging. DTI also invited her to sponsored trade shows, including the BAHANDI regional trade fair in Manila that generated booked orders of calamansi juice worth Php 2.5 million.