



The Sweet Smell of Success

VjANDEP Pastel

A couple got thrust into business simply by a desire to ensure a bright future for their children. Now on its 27th year, the business helps ensure a bright future for its over 200 employees.

THE PASTEL LEGACY
VjANDEP Pastel started from humble beginnings. Now, they have become a multi-million-peso enterprise. Through VjANDEP, Eleanor's family is sharing with the community, not only the lessons they learned from experience, but also the skills and resources they acquired through the years.

The small island of Camiguin off the northern coast of Mindanao is gaining world attention for its baked goodies.

Yet, its rise to popularity for its sweet-filled buns was simply driven by a mother's desire to see her children through college. The buns, with a variety of delicacies as fillings, are not of a modern culinary concoction but of an ancestral recipe developed at the end of the Spanish colonization.

Now this famous pastel has become a sought-after *pasalubong*, or a homecoming present, even abroad. The VjANDEP Pastel (pronounced with a silent J) is the acronym of Virgilio Jose and Eleanor Popera.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Eleanor and husband Retired Lieutenant Colonel Jose had three young children then, all wanting to become professionals.

"If our parents were to fulfill our dreams, finances would be the biggest hurdle," says Viel, the eldest and now the company physician and operations manager.

The couple had ventured into several small businesses, and failed, but these never deterred Eleanor at all. Dreaming of the perfect pastel from the roots of its flavorful history, Eleanor baked buns with sweet custard fillings for Christmas as a hobby, until that fateful day of January 8, 1990, when she took all that remained of her husband's Christmas bonus, bought Php 120 worth of ingredients, baked them into her specialty pastel, and then set out on foot across the island selling her goodies.

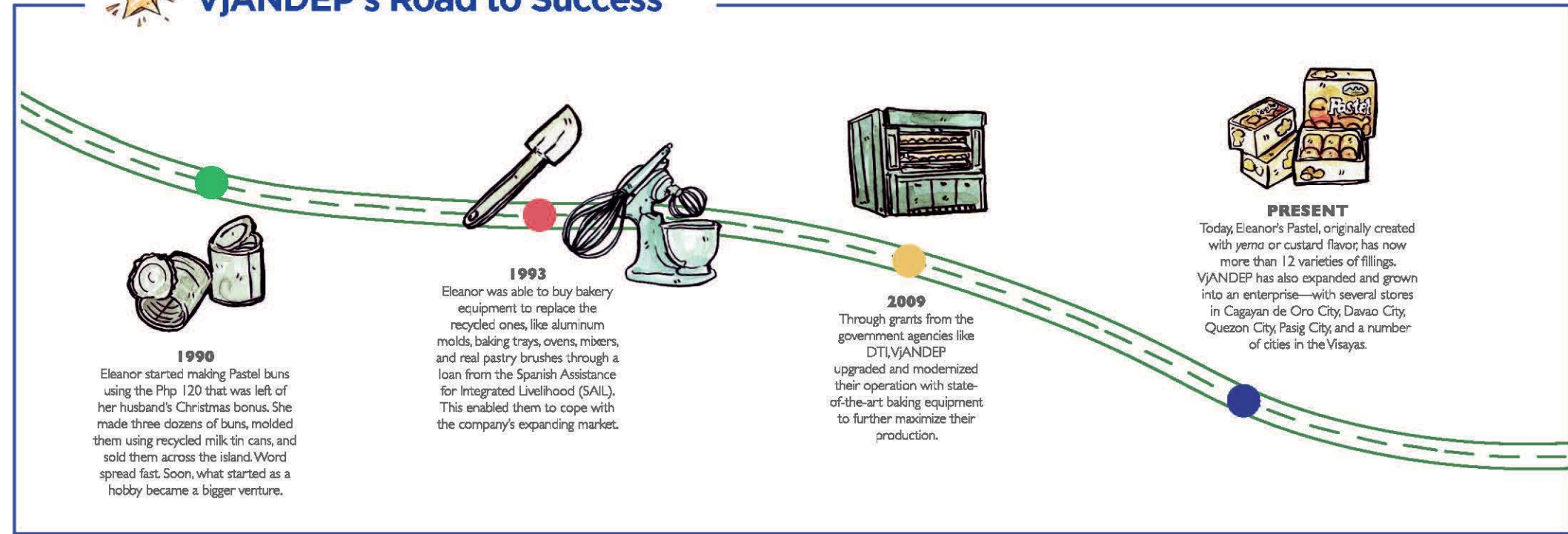
Her income doubled in each day that followed, consistently proving her right about her vision that showed in her dreams.



A RECIPE THAT HAS BEEN PASSED FROM GENERATIONS
VjANDEP Pastel has been a favorite *pasalubong* here and abroad. These baked goodies have been around for the past 27 years.



VjANDEP's Road to Success



BLESSINGS FROM DTI

For lack of sufficient capital, the family used improvised equipment—molders made from recycled tin cans of evaporated milk, pastry brush from sanitized disposable rooster feathers, makeshift drums for oven, coco husks for fuel, boxes printed with handwritten labels for the finished products, and winnower for transport—which Viel at age nine had to help prepare after school.

The equipment got upgraded in 1993 through a loan from the Spanish Assistance for Integrated Livelihood program, enabling VJANDEP to cope with the growing market.

A *Tulong sa Tao Loan* from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) further beefed up VJANDEP's production capacity.

Another loan in 2009, this time Php 20 million from the Development Bank of the Philippines' credit facility for the beneficiaries of the DTI's One Town, One Product (OTOP) program, eventually modernized VJANDEP's operations.

VJANDEP now operates from a multi-million-peso building with state-of-the-art baking facilities churning out products for nationwide distribution.

"We started growing with DTI," Eleanor says of the agency's help in credit, trainings, and market access.

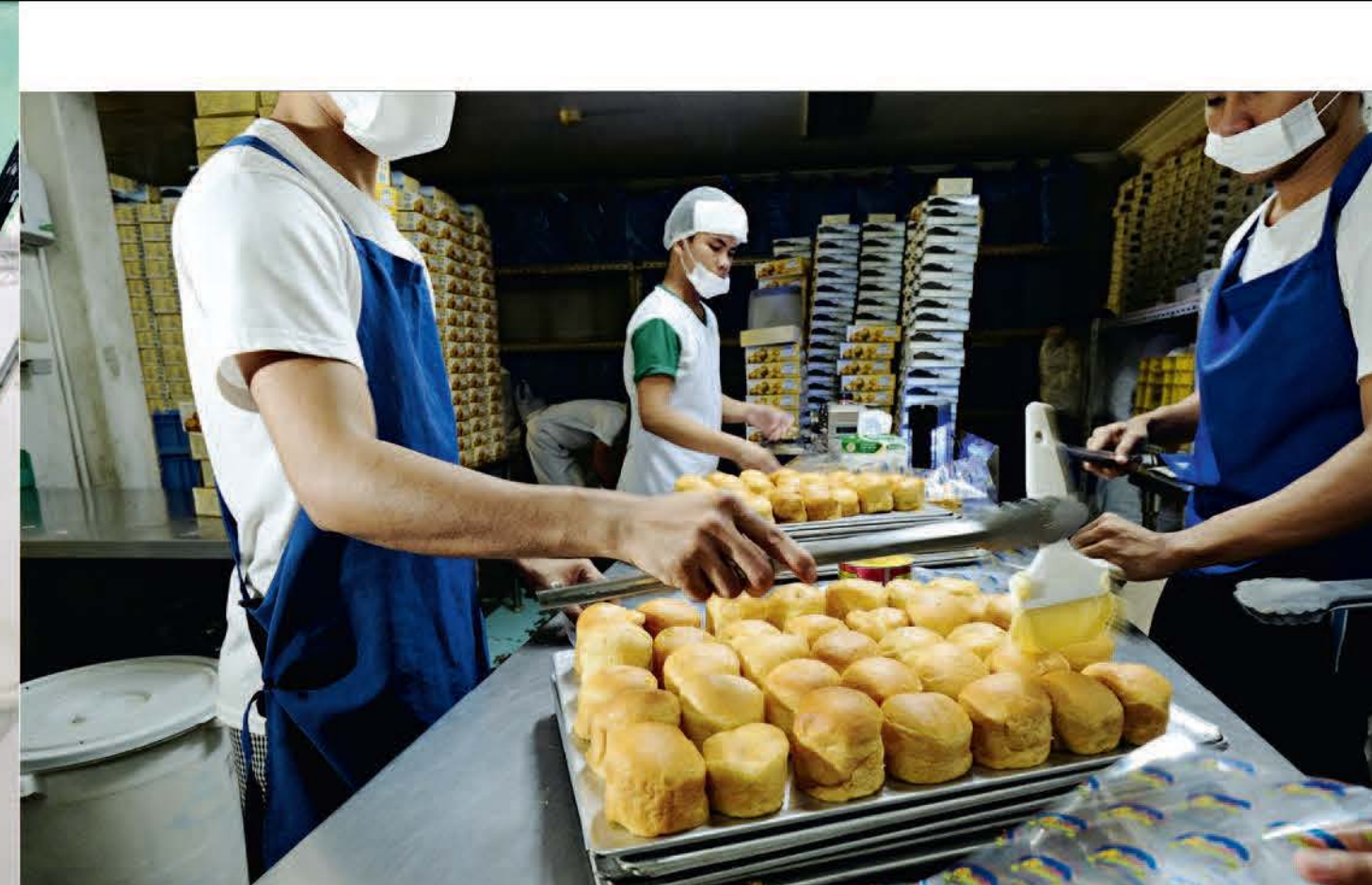
PRODUCT LINE

VJANDEP also produces bread loaves, cakes, pastries, and baked assortments, with made-to-order fruit flavors, among others.

Marking its 27th anniversary are three sub-brands—Samuel restaurant, Ba'ay hostel in Camiguin's capital town of Mambajao, and Gasa souvenir boutique in Cagayan de Oro.

HOW DTI HELPED

VJANDEP was able to gain access to the appropriate credit facilities of lending institutions. The company gained knowledge and competencies from seminars and training programs, and market linkages from exhibits through DTI's **One Town, One Product (OTOP)** program.



PAYING FORWARD

"Most of our staff come from the grass roots," Eleanor says, referring to the handicapped and those that did not have formal education. All her 200 employees undergo training programs and get full employment benefits.

The company recycles and reuses waste products, generates and consumes renewable energy, and supports religious, environmental, and relief activities.

FUTURE AND LEGACY

With over Php 50 million in capitalization, VJANDEP ranks among the processed food industry's major players.

The company and DTI have put up the Camiguin Food Products Association to help boost the small local enterprises, whose products are showcased in the Gasa *pasalubong* center and other souvenir shops in Cagayan de Oro and selected Manila areas, casting all the way from Camiguin the VJANDEP's sweet smell of success.



AWARDS

- DTI Gawad Entrepreneur** (*Tulong sa Tao Award*, 1997)
- Gawad Microentrepreneur** (*Tulong sa Tao-DTI regional winner*, 1997)
- Outstanding Techno Adaptor** (2003)
- One Global Filipino PCCI** (Excellence in Ecology and Economy Award, 2006)
- Negosyo Most Aspiring Entrepreneurs** (Northern Mindanao, 2007)
- DOST Golden Jubilee** (2008)
- DOLE Best in People Development** (Medium Enterprise category, 2008)
- DOLE Excellence and Achievement Award** (2009)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

VJANDEP hires those who need help the most and develop not only their skills but also their moral and spiritual values. The company is involved in the recycling and reusing of waste products, generation and consumption of renewable energy, cleaning of creeks, religious charities, and relief and outreach activities.