

# From the ponds to the supermarket shelves

By **MB Surtida** and **RY Buendia**

Bottled catfish frenchstyle in corn oil? It can be a feast. The process is simple and short, from the harvest until they are ready for the supermarket shelves.

### The process

From the farm, render the catfish (200-300 g each) lifeless with sprinkling of salt; skin it by using forceps; wash and then cut according to bottle height (8 oz); soak for 10 min in 10% salt solution; dry in oven (1 hr) or sundry (3 hr); fry in oil, 2 min; pack tightly in bottles to include spices -- 1 slice each pickles and carrots, 1/2 bayleaf, 3 granules whole black pepper, 2 small pcs hot chili pepper, 1 pinch msg; pour corn oil to neck of bottle; seal bottle tightly; cook in pressure cooker (10 lb/in<sup>2</sup>) for 90 minutes; allow pressure to decrease and open at 0 pressure. Shelf life is one year.

### Where to learn

The above process has been developed by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources - National Integrated Fisheries Technology and Development Center (BFAR-NIFTDC) in Binloc, Bonuan, Dagupan City. Center Officer in-Charge Westly Rosario says that bottling catfish french style in corn oil is one way of penetrating the AB market. "These people do not like to handle live fish, they want fish in meat form," he says.

Rosario says that the bottling technology can now be picked up by investors for mass production. When requested, the office conducts training for catfish production from breeding to processing, although filleting and freezing methodologies are still being developed. "Processing can expand the present catfish market which is controlled by very few middle men who know where production operations are. Production would also expand, and, hopefully be available to more consumers," he says.

His office crossbreeds male *C. macrocephalus* (native or *hitong tagalog*) and female *C. gariiepinus* (African). The cross breeding study would hopefully improve the growth rate (*C. macrocephalus* reach market size in 7-8 months while *C. gariiepinus*, 2-3 months), aroma, and meat quality. The crossbreeding study, started in 1999 has now produced 6-in long catfish. *C. macrocephalus* breeders, now very difficult to obtain, is from Baler, Quezon.

*Crossbred catfish, now in market sizes are being monitored for growth rate, aroma acceptability, and meat quality*



*Catfish meat, cut according to bottle height are skinned and soaked in brine solution (10%) for 6 minutes, fried and packed with condiments and corn oil*

*Condiments and bottled catfish ready for serving. Exposure to pressure cooking is 90 minutes to soften the thick mid bone of the catfish*

*Westly Rosario, Officer-in-Charge of NIFTDC in Dagupan City crossbreeds male native with female African catfish*



*These bottled catfish can now be produced by interested entrepreneurs*

