

# Korean BBQ King

## Fil-Am Mark Manguera, Owner and Co-Founder Korean BBQ Truck

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL / AJPress

**M**ARK Manguera, a 30-year old Fil-Am walked into his home after a night of club hopping and dancing. Stumbling into the room with his wife Caroline and sister-in-law Alice Shin, who arrived from New York, his belly began to growl. Hunger gnawed at him.

At 4am and with little money, the options on where to dine are limited. "Let's eat at a taco truck," he told them. So there he was, inside his home eating about \$10 worth of Mexican tacos and burritos and drinking a beer when a light bulb

flashed inside his head. He thought to himself 'wouldn't it be great if we put Korean barbecue on a taco?' Maybe it was the alcohol talking. He shared his drunken moment of revelation with the rest of the family, he said, 'Alice, wouldn't it

be great if someone put Korean barbecue on a taco, sold it from a truck at 2am and parked the truck in front of the club?' "Sure, Mark," they giggled. But the thought wouldn't leave Manguera's head. "Wouldn't it be a great idea if someone put Korean barbecue on a taco and sold it from a truck to all the late night partygoers?" he again thought about it. "They thought I was nuts," said Manguera, who's married into a Korean family. "They were telling me I was crazy and to just keep eating and drinking." He awoke the next morning convinced that he could make the idea work. He called a friend, Beverly Hilton Chef Roy Choi, about his idea. "He said I was crazy too," recalls Manguera. "But the more he thought about it, the more he believed it was a good idea."



Galing Pinoy showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit—the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, Galing Pinoy literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



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It only took about three weeks for Manguera to start the business. Now three months into it, Manguera and Choi's Kogi BBQ truck have introduced Asian flavors to the predominant Mexican taco truck world of Los Angeles. Kogi Barbecue was born that day and after a soft opening during Thanksgiving weekend in November, the Korean flavors and its unique taste have hundreds of people waiting in line, and following where the truck will be located on certain nights on Twitter. "We had no idea that we'd

be here today [with all the media attention]," Manguera told the Asian Journal. "We're still surprised. I can't believe it. Here we are hitting national and international news off of a taco truck." It's said that you can find inspiration in weird places. Greek Scholar Archimedes discovered the method for determining the volume of an object with an irregular shape while sinking into a bathtub, Sir Isaac Newton was sitting under an apple tree when an apple fell on his head, and he suddenly thought of the

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