

**SAMAL DAIRY FRESH**  
Bgy. San Isidro, Babak,  
Island Garden City of Samal, Davao



Samal, Island Garden City in Davao, is noted for coconuts, bananas and south seas pearls. One can reach the place by taking the bus from Davao City and alighting at km 9. A wharf and an Island City Paradise barge will take one to the island in 15 minutes. The fee would be Php 270.00 for a private vehicle and Php 14.00 for the ferry ride. As soon as the barge dock opens its gate, one can drive through a lime-soiled road and head off to one's destination.

The farm is situated in Bgy. San Isidro, Babak, Samal, some 7 km from the wharf. The cyclone-wired fence is lined in abundance with flowers of various colors. The pasture is full of green and thick napier grass where cows roam freely. The only sound that you can hear is the burring chopper spewing uniformly-cut napier grasses.

The owner, Mrs. Amie Cortez, makes it a point to instill hygiene and sanitation to all personnel, all the way to the animals down to the lab and on to the processing and selling area. Even the portable milking machine has a cover and is dried clean after every milking. The farm is refreshingly clean and odor-free.



Even as a young girl, Amie was already very fond of animals: be they pigs, dogs or cows. So while she and her husband enjoy a fairly good life in Davao City, she started raising some pigs and an orchard in Samal where they have some 19 hectares of landholding. Being a councilor in the area, she was exposed to a lot of trainings and seminars. She was very interested in any subject matter but her liking for cows was even more.

Amie's chance to own one came after being denied to having one carabao in the beginning. When the carabao module was spearheaded in the area, she readily took on the challenge of putting up a shed, constructing a water source and planting forage grasses for the coming animals. However, when the technical staff from the said region came over, she was informed that she could not avail of one, since the program was meant for marginalized farmers.

She was heartbroken and a bit down. Fortunately for her, NDA Mindanao offered cows on loan. And from then on, she never turned back. She got 3 pregnant cows and has already fully paid for these animals. To date

she has 48 cows broken down as follows:

- Pregnant dams –5
- Milking dams - 12
- Yearling heifers-12
- Bull calves - 3
- Mature Bull - 1
- Growing (?) Calves –14

Their product line, SAMAL Dairy Fresh boasts a variety of melon milk, durian milk, fresh milk and mango milk. These come in 1 liter and half liter Pet bottles packaging. It sells at Php 45 for fresh milk and Php 55 for flavored milk, farm gate price. At their Muffler Man Shop in Davao City, these are sold at Php 55 and 65 pesos respectively. Foreigners in the area have already taken a liking for their products

The farm employs four cowboys: two of them are assigned in each shift to do milking, gathering forage, chopping and feeding the cows. Two cowboys receive Php 3,900 each while the two nephews receive Php 3,000 each, doing forage chopping and cleaning of the pens only.



Archie, her husband even jokes that Amie spends more time with the animals than with her family. Jun acts as her boy-Friday, in-charge with keeping tab of the records, BFAD requirements and other liaison jobs while Ricky Constantino, is there to provide technical services on breeding, animal health management. John Fabella sees to the paper works, farm records, liaisioning with government as well as marketing requirements.

With a daily milk production of 80 liters, Amie still dreams of increasing their herd to a hundred to make up for the economies of scale. To them, rearing 10 head is just the same as rearing 50 to a hundred animals.

But all is not rosy in Samal. At one time, 6 of the animals got sick when given commercial feeds. The animals showed signs of lameness. So feeding management shifted back to green pasture. The cows are also given banana peelings which are quite abundant in the area and are taken pro bono. Only Php 200 per truck is paid when the peelings are loaded in the barge.

Lack of other basic equipment in the farm is considered a problem as well. The farm has only 1 set of mobile milking bucket. Amie would also like to have a cream separator for she dreams of making cheese and butter someday!. She also wants to have a cooling tank as her farm serves as the collection center for the other dairy farmers in the area.

AI services are sometimes delayed because of the distance of the farm from the technician. As it is, the local technician has a vast area to cover so that he is unable to see and check all the animals in the site.

To date, Samal Dairy Fresh Farm is bent on improving its waste management system by creating a biogas digester which will make use of the accumulated cow dung in the farm to generate methane gas. The effort started last November 2007 and is on its way to completion anytime soon. With this, the farm expects to lessen the farm's P9 thousand monthly electric bill consumption. The biogas digester shall be used to augment fuel resources needed in the processing area. A deep well was also constructed as water source for the farm.

When pressed to state her vision, this is what she said: "Gusto ko pang dumami ang herd namin, to have a milk processing plant in the island, I want stainless steel equipment para malinis lahat. And eventually to process ice-cream and ice-drop!"

The Cortezes' encourage others to take at least 2-3 head of dairy cows as a source of livelihood. In so doing farmers could increase their income levels, thus boosting the economic activity in the community.

Their three grown-up children, are also helping in the marketing of their produce.

Samal Dairy Fresh products can be found in Asia United Bank, Stella Maris, Davao Doctors Hospital, Pag-Ibig office, the BIR and other government offices in the locality. It also supplies the milk requirement for the milk feeding program in the island.

Samal Dairy Fresh is a member of Samal Dairy Multi-Purpose Cooperative which has 20 members.

Looking back, who would ever think that a secretary and an engineer thirty years ago will carve a niche on an entirely different arena? Come to think of it, maybe GOD paved the way for these two unique individuals to meet and engage in a different kind of engineering: that of Dairying!

Dairying their way to make the Island Garden City truly even special not because of pearls, bananas, and coconuts, but because of the arrival of black and white animals that turn grass into milk!

The time will come when the island will live up to its name of a garden haven with animals dotting the scene, milk overflowing, with a happy and well-fed community strong in its resolve to make SAMAL worth dairying for!

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