

## **John Guidon Dela Cruz**

Filbake Food Corporation

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### **Baking and banking on a lasting partnership**

Back in the '80s, the Dela Cruz family traveled for more than eight hours to nearby cities and back to their hometown in Aklan just to sell bread. "Why not bake our own bread?" they asked. They saw a business opportunity that got them baking in their backyard for their neighbors as customers in mind.

This backyard bakery eventually turned into the Bread & Butter Bakeshop, a retailer of bakery products in Kalibo, Aklan and the Dela Cruz family's main source of livelihood in 1986. From a small community bakery, Bread & Butter Bakeshop has since become a full-grown commissary operations facility, retailing across Western Visayas and Southern Luzon islands through strong partnerships with its franchisees, employees, and communities.

Filbake Food Corporation was established by the Dela Cruz family in 2000 and serves as the principal manufacturer and supplier of bakery products to the chain of Bread & Butter Bakeshops, which has recently opened its 120<sup>th</sup> store. Filbake also serves as the mother company of the group.

With the business slowly expanding, it was time for them to find a reliable financial partner. The Dela Cruz family has been a BPI client since 1987, so onboarding their business with the bank was no problem.

"The local BPI branch manager visited our shop and asked me how many employees we had. He offered us a loan afterwards. Our succeeding loans with BPI were then used primarily for our capacity building," said John Guidon Dela Cruz, Filbake Food Corporation's President.

They built a bigger facility, started franchising, and exponentially grew their customer base. More outlets and employees also meant more transactions to monitor.

Bizlink, BPI's online platform for the digital banking needs of companies, allows Filbake to conveniently monitor and facilitate business transactions. It helps them keep track of how much money is coming in from each of their stores, pay suppliers and bills, and handle the payroll of more than 500 employees.

"BPI was one of the early adopters of digital banking here in Aklan. During that time, digital banking was a foreign concept to a lot of small-time entrepreneurs. We were one of those that felt very comfortable with BPI. They made sure that we were able to monitor our transactions conveniently online," said Josefina Lucille Dela Cruz, Executive Vice President of Filbake Food Corporation.

Filbake's dominant presence in the market is also a testimony to its strong partnership with BPI over the years.

"With BPI, the relationship is quite different. We can tell that, through the years, BPI really takes the time to make it easier for us and that counts a lot for us," said John.

He explained that the family puts a lot of value in relationships because it takes time to build.

"As a small business, we often feel like we're not as important as the bigger businesses in the city. So when we find a bank that values us no matter how small we are, it makes a big difference to us," said Josefina.

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