



ESTABLISHMENT

# FREE SPIRITS

A concept bar in Maginhawa ushers the people into the new age of Democracy

STORY BY: **HANNA SORBITO**

INTERVIEW BY: **APEC STA. ANA**

**P**olitics and alcohol? Sounds like a quintessential recipe for disaster. Considering the current political climate we're at, calm and intellectual conversations about the state of the nation are pretty uncommon. We usually face aggressive and enraged arguments, which mirror the characteristics of the dominant leaders we have today—the macho patriarchs. Yet the commingling of political conversations and spirited drinks wasn't always a point of chaos. Here, I'd like to reference the early European salons, where the assembly of intellectuals, politicians, artists, and scientists usually deserves goblets of wine. Or how the Philippine revolution has emerged from the night in shanties where revolutionaries converse over tuba or lambanog.

This is the exact space that Demokrasya would like to recreate. Disguising itself from the rows of equally-promising food establishments in Maginhawa, Quezon City, this concept pub seeks to create a free and safe space for politically-charged conversations, thus their name Demokrasya.

At first glance, the inverted sun at the housefront is quite intriguing—even enticing—as if it works as a passage to a secret organization. The interior sports the typical modern feel of resto-bars in the area but is underscored with art pieces that scream nationalism. The bar counter craves for attention with a wooden centerpiece that hailed from Nayong Pilipino, an exact replica of Bonifacio's possession featuring Filipino trademarks like the KKK emblem, the Philippine flag, and a carabao. The wall is adorned with a massive mural of the Philippine eagle painted by one of the premier muralists in the country, Jappy Agoncillo.

The place also features a unique roster of signature cocktails, which are starting to generate buzz. Mi Ultimo Adios, a nod to Rizal's final poem before his execution, is akin to the part of history it references. It's a potent mix of lambanog, gin, tequila, rum, and chili peppers that will knock you out as if it's your last. Another favorite pick is Maria Clara, their rendition of the white rum and coconut mix. Contrary to the prim

and proper image ascribed to the traditional Filipina, this drink portrays a progressive and empowering view of Filipino women: strong, sweet, and intelligent.

But more than just the facade and its thoughtful menu, Demokrasya takes great pride in being “strongly political.” Because of this appeal, they often attract like-minded individuals, such as activists and student leaders, who pursue to stay relevant and speak about the realities of our country. The spirited walls of Demokrasya have harbored spectators who gather for music nights, poetry, and political meetings and discussions.

Yes, it might be easy to find a homegrown concept bar that offers drinks grounded on Philippine lore, history, beliefs, and traditions. Yet what keeps Demokrasya magnetic is how it builds and nurtures a community of freedom-loving people. Their advocacy to revolutionize business and politics is groundbreaking. So who knows? The next Bonifacio might just be roaming around the place, getting himself a glass of Mi Ultimo Adios. 