

Philippine Regional Cuisine: Region VIII – Eastern Visayas

A journey through the flavors, traditions, and culinary heritage of the Philippines' gateway to the Pacific Ocean — where coastal abundance, coconut richness, and Waray resilience shape every dish.

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Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

01

Geography & Provinces

Identify the geographical characteristics of Eastern Visayas and name its provinces and regional center.

02

Geography & Cuisine

Explain how geography influences regional cuisine and food traditions.

03

Culture & People

Describe the culture and traditions of the Waray and Cebuano people.

04

Products & Preparation

Identify major agricultural and fishery products and discuss traditional methods of food preparation.

05

Provincial Dishes & Heritage

Recognize specialty dishes from each province and appreciate Eastern Visayas' contribution to Philippine culinary heritage.

Introduction to Region VIII – Eastern Visayas

Eastern Visayas (Region VIII) is located in the eastern part of the Visayas island group and serves as the **Philippines' gateway to the Pacific Ocean**. The region is composed of six provinces: **Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar, Samar, and Southern Leyte**. Its regional center is **Tacloban City**, located in Leyte.

Eastern Visayas possesses a rich culinary heritage shaped by its coastal environment, agricultural economy, indigenous traditions, and historical influences. The region is renowned for its seafood abundance, root-crop-based dishes, coconut-rich cuisine, and native delicacies.

Coastal & Island Life

Seafood, shellfish, and marine traditions define everyday cooking.

Cultural Influences

Waray, Cebuano, and Spanish colonial heritage shape flavors and customs.

Famous Delicacies

Binagol, Moron, Kinilaw, Roskas, and Suman Latik are regional icons.

Resilience

Resourcefulness during natural disasters has shaped a uniquely adaptive food culture.

Geography of Eastern Visayas

Location & Boundaries

Eastern Visayas occupies the eastern section of the Visayas, facing the Pacific Ocean. The region consists of the islands of Samar, Leyte, and Biliran, along with several smaller islands.

- **Philippine Sea** — east
- **Samar Sea** — west
- **Camotes Sea** — southwest
- **Leyte Gulf** — south

Major Geographic Features

- Extensive coastlines
- Mountain ranges
- Rivers and lakes
- Coastal plains
- Marine ecosystems

Important Landmarks

- San Juanico Bridge
- Sohoton Natural Bridge National Park
- Kalanggaman Island

Climate

Tropical maritime climate with high rainfall, frequent typhoons, and humid coastal conditions — supporting agriculture, fisheries, and coconut farming while requiring resilient food systems.

Region VIII - Eastern Visayas



How Geography Shapes the Cuisine

The region's geography directly influences what people grow, catch, and cook. Abundant coastlines yield rich seafood harvests, while fertile inland areas support coconut groves, rice paddies, and root-crop farms. Local dishes frequently feature:



Fish & Shellfish

The primary protein source, drawn from coastal waters, rivers, and the open Pacific. Used fresh, grilled, boiled, or prepared as kinilaw.



Coconut Milk

A cornerstone of both savory dishes and native desserts, reflecting the region's status as a major coconut-producing area.



Root Crops

Cassava, sweet potato, and taro (gabi) are widely cultivated and form the base of many traditional delicacies, including the famous Binagol.



Rice & Native Fruits

Rice is the staple of every meal, while banana, pineapple, jackfruit, and mango enrich the regional food landscape.

Provinces and Regional Center

Region VIII is composed of six provinces, each with its own capital and distinct culinary identity. **Tacloban City** in Leyte serves as the regional center.

Province	Capital	Culinary Highlight
Biliran	Naval	Seafood & coconut-based dishes
Eastern Samar	Borongan City	Binagol & traditional Waray cooking
Leyte	Tacloban City	Moron, Suman Latik & native delicacies
Northern Samar	Catarman	Seafood & agricultural products
Samar	Catbalogan City	Roskas & baked delicacies
Southern Leyte	Maasin City	Coconut products & grilled seafood

 Tacloban City is the regional center of Eastern Visayas, serving as the political, economic, and cultural hub of Region VIII.

Culture and Traditions

The major ethnolinguistic groups of Eastern Visayas include the **Waray-Waray**, **Cebuano**, Bisakol communities, and indigenous peoples of Samar and Leyte. The Waray people are especially known for their resilience, hospitality, and vibrant cultural traditions.

Hospitality

Guests are warmly welcomed and served local delicacies and seafood dishes — a cornerstone of Waray social life.

Bayanihan Spirit

Communal cooperation remains strong, particularly during festivals and recovery efforts after natural disasters.

Religious Devotion

Catholic traditions strongly influence local celebrations and food customs throughout the region.



Major Festivals of Eastern Visayas



Sangyaw Festival (Leyte)

Held in Tacloban City, the Sangyaw Festival celebrates the city's rich cultural heritage through vibrant street dancing, colorful costumes, and community performances that honor local history and identity.



Pintados-Kasadyaan Festival

One of the most iconic festivals in the region, it highlights the history and traditions of Eastern Visayas, featuring elaborate body paint and tattoo art inspired by ancient Visayan warrior culture.



Manaragat Festival

A celebration of fishing communities and marine resources, the Manaragat Festival honors the sea-faring traditions and livelihoods of coastal communities throughout Eastern Visayas.

Agricultural and Fishery Products

Agriculture and fisheries remain vital sectors in Eastern Visayas, providing the raw ingredients that define its cuisine.

Major Agricultural Products

- **Coconut** — among the country's major producing areas
- **Rice** — primary staple crop
- **Corn** — widely cultivated throughout the region
- **Root Crops** — cassava, sweet potato, taro
- **Fruits** — banana, pineapple, jackfruit, mango

Major Fishery Products

- Tuna
- Mackerel
- Sardines
- Squid
- Shrimp
- Crabs
- Shellfish

The region's extensive coastlines and rich marine ecosystems make it one of the Philippines' most productive fishing areas, supplying both local consumption and national markets.

Traditional Methods of Food Preparation

1

Steaming

Used for suman, rice cakes, and native delicacies. Banana leaves are commonly used as wrappers, imparting a subtle aroma to the food.

2

Boiling & Simmering

Common for soups, seafood dishes, and root-crop preparations. Slow simmering develops deep, rich flavors in broths and stews.

3

Grilling

Used for fish, shellfish, and pork. Grilling over open flame or charcoal is a beloved technique that enhances the natural flavors of fresh seafood.

4

Kinilaw Preparation

Fresh seafood is marinated using vinegar, citrus juice, ginger, and chili — a technique similar to ceviche that "cooks" the fish through acid.

5

Coconut-Based Cooking

Coconut milk is incorporated into both desserts and savory dishes, lending richness, sweetness, and a distinctly tropical character to the cuisine.

Biliran & Eastern Samar

Biliran

Known for seafood and coconut-based dishes, Biliran's cuisine reflects its island geography and abundant marine resources.

- Kinilaw na Isda
- Grilled Seafood
- Coconut-based Native Delicacies
- Binato Rice Cakes

Eastern Samar

Rich in seafood and traditional Waray cooking, Eastern Samar is home to one of the region's most iconic delicacies — **Binagol**.

- Binagol
- Native Coconut Desserts
- Kinilaw
- Seafood Soups

📖 **Binagol** is a sweet delicacy made from taro (gabi), coconut milk, sugar, and egg yolks — traditionally served in a coconut shell, making it as beautiful to present as it is delicious to eat.

Leyte – Native Delicacies & Waray Cuisine

Leyte, home to the regional center Tacloban City, is celebrated for its native delicacies and traditional Waray cuisine. Its dishes are deeply rooted in local ingredients and time-honored preparation methods.

Moron

A chocolate-flavored sticky rice delicacy wrapped in banana leaves. One of Leyte's most beloved and recognizable treats.

Binagol

Sweet taro-based delicacy made with coconut milk, sugar, and egg yolks, served in a coconut shell.

Suman Latik

Steamed glutinous rice cake topped with latik (coconut caramel), a classic Filipino merienda with a distinctly Visayan character.

Kinilaw

Fresh fish or seafood marinated in vinegar and citrus, seasoned with ginger and chili — a refreshing and vibrant dish.



Northern Samar & Samar

Northern Samar

Known for seafood and agricultural products, Northern Samar's cuisine draws from both its coastal waters and fertile farmlands.

- Seafood Kinilaw
- Coconut-based Delicacies
- Native Rice Cakes
- Grilled Fish

Samar

Known for traditional Waray cuisine and baked delicacies, Samar is home to **Roskas** — a traditional sweet bread from Catbalogan that has become a regional icon.

- Roskas
- Torta
- Binagol
- Seafood Dishes

 **Roskas** is a traditional sweet bread originating from Catbalogan, Samar. Its distinctive ring shape and slightly sweet, crunchy texture make it a popular pasalubong (homecoming gift) from the region.

Southern Leyte – Coconut & Seafood Cuisine

Southern Leyte, with its capital in Maasin City, is known for its coconut products and seafood cuisine. The province's culinary identity is defined by the interplay of fresh ocean catches and the rich, creamy character of coconut-based preparations.

Kinilaw

Fresh seafood marinated in vinegar and citrus — a staple across Southern Leyte's coastal communities.

Adobong Isda

Fish cooked in the classic Filipino adobo style — vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, and bay leaves — a hearty and flavorful everyday dish.

Coconut-based Desserts

Rich sweets and native delicacies made with fresh coconut milk, reflecting the province's abundant coconut production.

Grilled Seafood

Freshly caught fish and shellfish grilled over charcoal — simple, smoky, and deeply satisfying.

Spotlight: Iconic Dishes of Eastern Visayas



Binagol

Made from taro, coconut milk, sugar, and egg yolks. Served in a coconut shell. A signature delicacy of Eastern Samar and Leyte.



Moron

Chocolate-flavored sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves. A beloved Leyte delicacy with a rich, sweet flavor and chewy texture.



Kinilaw

Fresh seafood marinated in vinegar, citrus, ginger, and chili. Found across all provinces — the quintessential Eastern Visayas dish.



Roskas

Traditional sweet bread from Catbalogan, Samar. A popular pasalubong with a distinctive ring shape and crunchy texture.

Famous Culinary Ingredients of Eastern Visayas

Ingredient	Role in Cuisine
Coconut	Used in cooking and desserts; a cornerstone of both savory and sweet preparations throughout the region
Fish	Main protein source; used fresh, grilled, boiled, kinilaw-style, or in soups and stews
Shellfish	Common coastal ingredient; crabs, shrimp, and shellfish feature prominently in everyday meals
Rice	Staple food accompanying every meal; also used in native delicacies like suman and moron
Gabi (Taro)	Main ingredient of Binagol; a versatile root crop used in both sweet and savory preparations
Vinegar	Essential for Kinilaw; also used in adobo and as a condiment throughout the region
Banana Leaves	Traditional food wrapper for suman, moron, and other steamed delicacies; imparts subtle aroma

Dining Etiquette and Food Practices

Traditional Practices

- Rice accompanies every meal without exception
- Seafood is frequently served as the main dish
- Meals are shared family-style, with dishes placed at the center of the table
- Guests are honored with the best available dishes — a reflection of deep-rooted hospitality

Culinary Values

- **Hospitality** — welcoming guests with generosity and warmth
- **Resilience** — adapting food practices in the face of natural disasters and hardship
- **Community Cooperation** — the bayanihan spirit extends to food preparation and sharing
- **Preservation of Family Recipes** — traditional dishes are passed down through generations, keeping culinary heritage alive

The Importance of Eastern Visayas Cuisine

Eastern Visayas cuisine holds deep significance — not only as a collection of recipes, but as a living expression of the region's identity, values, and history.



Preserves Waray Cultural Heritage

Traditional dishes, preparation methods, and food customs carry the stories and identity of the Waray and Cebuano peoples across generations.



Promotes Culinary Tourism

Iconic delicacies like Binagol, Moron, and Roskas attract visitors and put Eastern Visayas on the Philippine culinary map.



Supports Local Agriculture & Fisheries

Regional cuisine creates demand for locally grown and caught products, sustaining the livelihoods of farmers and fisherfolk.



Demonstrates Resourcefulness

The cuisine showcases the creativity of a people who have learned to transform simple, local ingredients into distinctive and flavorful dishes.

Eastern Visayas at a Glance

PROVINCES.



**6 PROVINCES:
BILIRAN, LEYTE,
SAMAR & MORE**

REGIONAL CENTER.



**TACLOBAN CITY:
REGIONAL CENTER**

AGRICULTURE.



**MAJOR PRODUCTS:
COCONUT, RICE,
TUNA, SHELLFISH**

LOCAL DELICACIES.



**FAMOUS DISHES:
BINAGOL, MORON,
KINILAW, ROSKAS**

CULTURAL GROUPS:



**CULTURAL
WARAY-WARAY,
CEBUANO**

KEY VALUES:



**KEY VALUES:
HOSPITALITY,
BAYANIHAN**

From the coconut groves of Biliran to the fishing communities of Southern Leyte, Eastern Visayas is a region of extraordinary culinary richness — shaped by geography, culture, and the enduring spirit of its people.

Key Takeaways

Geography Drives Cuisine

Coastal location, tropical climate, and fertile land produce the seafood, coconuts, and root crops that define Eastern Visayas cooking.

Six Provinces, One Heritage

Each province — Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar, Samar, and Southern Leyte — contributes unique dishes to the regional table.

Iconic Delicacies

Binagol, Moron, Kinilaw, Roskas, and Suman Latik are the culinary ambassadors of Eastern Visayas to the rest of the Philippines.

Resilience & Creativity

The cuisine reflects the resourcefulness and cultural pride of the Waray people — transforming local ingredients into a celebrated culinary tradition.

- ✔ Eastern Visayas cuisine is a testament to the resilience and creativity of its people — a flavorful bridge between the land, the sea, and generations of tradition.