

Customers pampered at Manila's first 'maid cafe'

Written by Administrator

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Cafe attendants, dressed up in maid uniforms, clean up at the Meidolls Cafe in Cainta, Rizal on Jan. 30. The Philippines opened its first costume play maid cafe in the country where servers entertain customers with Japanese role playing culture. (Reuters/Cheryl Ravelo)

MANILA — Waitresses in frilly French maid costumes, some with elaborate blonde ringlets tumbling down their shoulders, serve coffee and tea, pampering customers at Manila's first "maid cafe."

The recently-opened cafe in capital Manila, also a Philippines first, hopes to cash in on the growing popularity of "cosplay" or costume play among Filipinos, in which participants dress up as favorite characters from anime or manga comics to indulge in a little escapist fantasy.

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The trend originated in Japan, where maid cafes — a subset of cosplay restaurants — have been around for over a decade.

In “Meidolls,” the Manila cafe, waitresses dress as anime-inspired French maids, complete with wigs with long tresses, dresses and pinafores.

Some wear cat or rabbit ears with their outfits, while others sport pink hair.

The waitresses treat their patrons as masters and mistresses, acting like servants in a private home.

“I guess that’s what we all want once in a while after a busy day of work or busy day at school. You wanna just, you know, lie back and be served by your own servants,” said Reia Ayunan, owner of Meidolls.

Ayunan added that since Filipinos are naturally passionate and hospitable to guests, this combines perfectly with the idea of service required in a maid cafe.

Maid cafe waitresses are required to engage with their customers, making sure they feel at home.

“We’re trying to take it one step higher than the (usual) Filipino hospitality,” said Ariane Gonzaga, one of the cafe attendants.

Ayunan’s cafe, set up with the help of the growing Filipino cosplay community, has so far done well with customers.

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"The servers are courteous, they're all pretty and nice to talk to," said customer Wow Nabong, who had never heard of a cosplay cafe before or even watched any Japanese anime.

To avoid problems with customers who might perhaps show too much interest in the waitresses, the cafe has strict rules of conduct, driven home by a video played in the cafe.

Customers are not allowed to ask for personal information, nor are they allowed to stalk any of the staff.

The number of cosplay enthusiasts has been growing in the Philippines, with over 10,000 people taking part in cosplay conventions around the country.

Maid cafes were often set up during these gatherings on a temporary basis.

Occasionally, carrying the anime theme still further, the waitresses entertain patrons by singing Japanese songs and dancing with them.

"For me, it's fun because we're always in costume," said Meidolls waitress Sarah Guevara.

"Every day is a cosplay day."

(Reuters)