

HOW TO COOK
**INDONESIAN
FOOD**



COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

In memory of Ailsa Zainu'ddin, 1927–2019

A.G. THOMSON ZAINU'DDIN



AUSTRALIAN INDONESIAN ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

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Nila Zainu'ddin thought up the title. The wood engravings were generously lent by the editor of *Meanjin Quarterly*, Mr C.B. Christesen. The author is grateful to all the members who assisted with publication, distribution and financing of the original book – not to forget those who tested the recipes!

For the new edition:

Ann McCarthy provided biographical information and the author's revisions and additions to the original text. Nani Pollard and Tesna Copeland provided advice on the recipes and language. Lester Levinson and Prue Price lent their treasured copies of the original editions.

FOREWORD

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE to present this commemorative edition of *How to Cook Indonesian Food* by Ailsa Zainu'ddin, some 54 years after it first appeared in print.

The original book, published by our Association in 1965, was a deceptively modest looking volume that contained more than 140 recipes in its 72 black and white pages. One of few sources of Indonesian recipes available in the 1960s, it proved its popularity by being reprinted and revised multiple times through until 1982. Owners of those early editions guard them closely and I'm indebted to two former committee members for lending me their copies for this project, complete with sauce stains.

Why AIAV stopped publishing the cookbook we do not know, but three years ago the idea of reissuing it was born. The project passed through several changes of committee and was delayed by other events, but we are very proud of the end result and trust that Ailsa would be too.

The distinctive woodcut illustrations on the cover and throughout the original edition were a feature that had to be retained, as was the author's inimitable voice. The "About this Book" section, retained from the 1982 edition, demonstrates the author's enthusiasm and resourcefulness while also reflecting the culinary environment of Melbourne at that time.

Revisions to the text are largely ones that Ailsa herself had planned, including reordering the lists of ingredients, adding a new section on "How to Handle Chilli", and revising some of the recipes, no doubt on the basis of further taste-testing. Ailsa's notes for these revisions were passed to us by her friend and archivist Ann McCarthy. The "Notes on Ingredients" section has been revised to reflect the wider availability of Asian cooking ingredients, and common English names for ingredients are used wherever possible. The larger format, more open layout and durable binding hopefully contribute to making this edition user- and kitchen-friendly.

Thanks go to the many people who have contributed to this project, especially Ailsa's daughters, Nila Latimer and Lisa Wise, and friend Ann McCarthy.

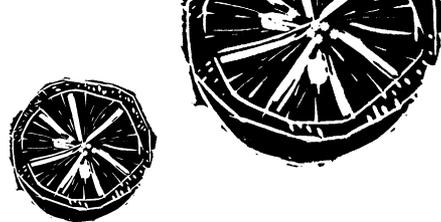
The recipes are the heart and soul of this book and we trust you will find joy and satisfaction in trying them, as Ailsa herself would have wished.

Selamat makan!

Steve Dobney, President AIAV

July 2019

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PREFACE

IT IS HARD FOR ME to believe that more than half a century has passed since my mother put together this collection of recipes. The last revision and printing of *How to Cook Indonesian Food* was in 1982, some 37 years ago, so I am delighted that the Australian Indonesian Association of Victoria has decided to revise and republish the book.

It is unfortunate that my mother is no longer able to participate in the process as I know she had hoped the book would one day be revised and reprinted.

When the early editions were written, many of the ingredients required were difficult to obtain, so a lot of explanation was provided about the ingredients, where they could be purchased and possible substitutions. This situation has changed significantly in the past 37 years!

For example, coconut milk (*santan*), which is an ingredient in many of the recipes, had to be made up from either fresh or desiccated coconut. It's hard to imagine anyone going to all that trouble these days since it is now ubiquitous.

Other ingredients that were difficult to obtain but can now be purchased in supermarkets include snow peas (*kacang kapri*), soybean curd (*tahu*), Asian basil (*kemangi*), galangal (*laos*), candlenut (*kemiri*), dried prawns (*udang kering*), lemongrass (*serai*), vermicelli (*su'un*) and tempeh.

Some of the original recipes included monosodium glutamate (*ve-tsin*). My mother would certainly not have included it in the ingredients if she had known about the ill effects of MSG, but 50 years ago or even 35 years ago those ill effects were not known.

I was only eight years old when my mother was “dogging the steps” of my grandmother, trying to quantify and put together the collection of recipes. At that time, I made two contributions: the first was thinking up the very original title and the second was sampling again and again my favourite recipe: peanut crisps (*rempeyek kacang*).

The note at the bottom of this recipe is most applicable: best prepared “when there are not too many people around to sample the wares”. At the beginning of the recipe there is also a note that it is tricky to make and, alas, when I was much older, I did discover that making *rempeyek kacang* was indeed tricky. My *rempeyek kacang* were never as nice as the ones my grandmother made. She had developed the art of keeping the temperature correct, but not the art of keeping the taste-testers at bay.

As a teenager I did enjoy my mother's “dinner parties with a difference”. The notes on catering for large numbers are also useful although I don't believe Mother followed her own advice. She always tended to over-cater, but we certainly didn't mind that there were leftovers the next day. My favourite dishes are all listed in the dinner menu suggestions.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in revising and reprinting *How to Cook Indonesian Food*.

Nila Latimer (née Zainu'ddin)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AILSA GWENNYTH THOMSON (“Tommy”) Zainu’ddin was born in Box Hill, Melbourne, in 1927 and attended Methodist Ladies’ College (MLC) in Kew. She went on to achieve a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History and English, and later a Masters degree from Melbourne University. Her research was supervised by Manning Clark and she was his research assistant at Canberra University College from 1952 to 1954.

While in Canberra, Ailsa met Indonesian diplomat and former freedom fighter Zainu’ddin (“Din”) and they became close friends. Despite their religious differences, Ailsa and Zainu’ddin married in 1954 in Jakarta where she worked at the Ministry of Education under the Volunteer Graduate Scheme for Indonesia. With their first daughter, Nila, the couple returned to Australia in 1956, where Zainu’ddin took up a role as Indonesian language teacher in the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Melbourne. Their second daughter, Lisa, was born two years later.

Ailsa returned to university in 1964, graduating with a Bachelor of Education, and joined the Faculty of Education at Monash University as its first appointment in the history of education. She developed and taught undergraduate courses in the history of education in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia. She later pioneered a separate course on the history of education for women and maintained an ongoing commitment to women’s education.

During her time in Indonesia, Ailsa had developed a liking for Indonesian food and upon her return to Australia began serious experiments in its preparation, encouraged of course by her husband. However, it was not until the arrival of her mother-in-law, Mrs Saodah, that by “dogging her footsteps”, Ailsa was able to compile a collection of recipes and develop an awareness of the “traps for young players”. She incorporated much of this experience into her introduction to this book. Ailsa continued her experimentation with cooking Indonesian food throughout her life and she (the cook) and her husband (the master of ceremonies) hosted many renowned dinner parties featuring amazing Indonesian feasts.

Ailsa and Zainu’ddin were members of the Australian Indonesian Association of Victoria, and Din served as president from 1963 to 1964. The following year the Association published the first edition of *How to Cook Indonesian Food*, a collection of recipes that Ailsa had put together since their marriage. While she did not claim to be an expert in Indonesian cooking, she applied her rigorous scholarly training to learning how to cook Indonesian food due to “the necessity imposed by matrimony” (her words!).

Ailsa maintained her links with her old school and was awarded a PhD from Monash University in 1983 for her centenary history of MLC, entitled *They Dreamt of a School*. She retired as a Senior Lecturer from the Education Faculty at Monash University in 1992.

Ann McCarthy, Ailsa Zainu’ddin & Lisa Wise (née Zainu’ddin)

ABOUT THIS BOOK

From the 1982 edition

SOME YEARS AGO, the Australian Indonesian Association of Victoria published a booklet called *46 Indonesian Recipes for You*. This was a very small sample of the thousands of different recipes found throughout the archipelago, and, since the book appeared, I have been collecting further recipes, some by dogging the steps of my mother-in-law, some from friends, some from Indonesian recipe books, all to some extent (greater or less) adapted to the ingredients available here. It may prove of some value to Australians going to Indonesia or Indonesians coming to Australia to have some idea of equivalents and substitutes. There are over three times as many recipes in this present book as were in the former one, but they remain a very small sample.

Indonesian cooking is not itself an entity. There are special dishes and special styles of cooking developed in different districts. There are also generally known dishes with local variants. My preferences have tended to emphasise the dishes of Sumatra, and particularly those of the West Coast (Minangkabau), the area from which my in-laws originally came. This cooking is famed throughout the archipelago. The Minangkabau are great travellers, and where they settle, they establish Minangkabau restaurants, and produce their pungently hot dishes. Where it is indicated that a dish is from Padang (the Minangkabau capital) it is implied that it will be a pungent one, and the beginner is warned.

In most areas of Indonesia, the staple food is rice. It is eaten with each meal, fried for breakfast and plain with various side dishes for the midday meal (usually the main meal) and the evening meal (which is often the remainder of the main meal reheated). The nature and variety of these dishes depend on the economic circumstances of the family as well as the particular district in which it is situated and the ethnic group from which it comes. For many of the poorer people, two meals a day are the rule, and the rice is accompanied by small dried fish and chillies. The exception to this would be the occasional festival (*selamatan*).

For an Indonesian middle-class suburban family, the midday or evening meal would be served as follows: in the centre of the table there would be a large platter or bowl of rice. (When a meal is served buffet style it is more convenient to put this at one end so that guests may begin with rice and then circulate around the table.) Surrounding it would be the various additional dishes. In front of each guest would be set a plate, a spoon and fork, and, to the left of the plate, a glass either of water or of weak cold black unsweetened tea. In some families, but usually not when foreign guests are present, finger bowls would be set instead of spoons and forks. Then the food is pressed together with the fingers of the right hand, taking care to get no food on the palm of the hand. The thumb is used to propel the "rice ball" into the mouth. There are some dishes which can be better blended with the rice in this way than they can by use of eating implements. I regard *Rendang Padang* as one of these.

The guests serve themselves, first taking rice and then adding portions of the additional dishes. Indonesians usually take a very large helping of rice and a much smaller one of the additional dishes. For them, a meal without rice is not a meal. According to Indonesian etiquette, the return helping should be taken before the plate is completely empty. It is also courteous to take two helpings rather than one and wise to estimate the first helping with that in mind!

As well as the additional dishes there would usually be at least one spicy *sambal* and some crisp garnish such as prawn crackers (*kerupuk*), fried peanuts or *rempeyek kacang*. Potato chips could provide an Australian substitute.

Normally an Indonesian meal does not include dessert. The main course is followed by fresh fruit – pawpaw, pineapple, banana, mango or other tropical fruits – but fruit salad makes an appropriate Australian ending to an Indonesian meal.

In collecting these recipes, I had two main occasions in mind. The first is the party with a difference, either for Australians or for a mixed Australian–Indonesian group. At the end I have listed some dishes particularly suitable for this kind of dinner or supper party. As party fare, Indonesian food has one distinct advantage. Most Indonesian dishes can be prepared in advance in the morning, or with refrigeration, on the previous day and reheated prior to serving. In the case of such dishes as noodles, *soto* or cucumber salad, the separate ingredients can be prepared and stored, and the final combining done as part of the reheating process.

The second occasion is the ordinary family meal, either as variety once in a while, or as a guide to those who, for one reason or another, find themselves catering for Indonesians. The most compelling reason for this is, of course, matrimony, particularly if one's spouse is conservative in eating habits. Here some modification has to be reached. I have seen an estimate of the time taken in the preparation of the Indonesian meal – from the purchase of ingredients, a daily chore, to the serving of the meal it takes about seven to eight hours a day, which of course presupposes someone engaged full-time in this activity. Most middle-class Indonesian families would have at least one such servant. I hasten to add that this amount of time is not needed in Australia – for a start, our shopping is usually a weekly affair, food processors can cut the time required for grinding and pounding, as can the humble mincer and grater, while pressure cookers can help cut cooking time.

In addition, a compromise can usually be reached. Instead of four or five small servings of various dishes, the family can be served one large amount of one dish, containing both meat and vegetables, or one protein dish (meat, fish or eggs) with plain vegetables boiled separately in the original Australian style. Alternatively, thinly sliced mixed vegetables can be cooked for 2 or 3 minutes in a little oil (crushed garlic and/or fresh ginger and/or a little chilli can be sautéed for a minute in the oil before the vegetables are added – they require constant stirring during this process. Then ½ cup salted water (or soy sauce/stock) and a sprinkling of black pepper and/or nutmeg can be added and the whole covered, brought quickly to the boil and boiled fast for 4 or 5 minutes. It is necessary to check towards the end that the water has not evaporated too fast. If so, a little extra should of course be added to avert disaster.

The main point about this kind of cooking for the family meal, particularly if the family has not been taught to despise tongue, brains, liver and other such delicacies, is that it is both economical and nutritious. You can use the cheaper cuts of meat, and vegetables in season. Spices can be stored in airtight containers and used as required, although it is wise to buy them in small quantities because, although they can be stored, the fresher they are the better. In any case they can be invested in and accumulated gradually, starting with the more commonly used.

Finally, as with most Eastern cookery, the reduction of dishes to recipe form is not easy. The mathematical exactitude of Western cooking is strange to Indonesian cooks. For them cooking is an art rather than a science, and a cookbook which claims to be designed for Domestic Economy schools may be full of directions such as “Cook until it smells right” or “Season until it tastes right”. So these recipes are, in a sense, approximations. It is possible to vary the amounts of ingredients and the variety of vegetables used according to individual taste and availability, though obviously this requires a certain amount of initial experiment. It is possible in some dishes to substitute cow’s milk for *santan** although the resultant dish will certainly lose something of its distinctive flavour in the process. I doubt whether this substitution could be made in *Rendang Padang* and have never had the courage (or desire) to try, but it does work in the case of *opor*.

In catering for large numbers, you should remember to divide the number of guests by the number of dishes being served; e.g. for 12 guests and 4 dishes, each dish should be thought of as serving 3 people. Otherwise the tendency is to over-cater. This, of course, has the advantage that, on the day after the party, there is no need for cooking, simply for reheating, but if the menu remains the same the week after the party it may pall a little.

You are strongly advised to read the “Notes on Ingredients” before despairing about strange terms and unfamiliar ingredients.

A.G. Thomson Zainu'ddin

*See “Notes on Ingredients”.

NOTES ON INGREDIENTS



***asam* (tamarind, lit. sour)**

In Indonesian cookery *asam* (tamarind, or sometimes lemon juice) is as indispensable and basic an ingredient as salt. Tamarind paste is available at many supermarkets or Asian grocery stores. You can also find the fresh form of tamarind fruit at some Asian grocery stores.

***bawang goreng* (fried onion flakes)**

Bawang goreng (fried onion flakes) are used as a garnish for many Indonesian dishes. A recipe is included in this book (see page 80), but if you need to save time you can buy them ready-made in Asian grocery stores.

coconut milk/cream (*santan*)

Many recipes call for coconut milk, or the thicker coconut cream. In the earlier editions of this book it was recommended that cooks prepare their own coconut milk from fresh whole coconuts. These days the tinned varieties that are available almost everywhere are totally suitable and are most convenient. However, for those who would still like to make their own *santan*, the original instructions are included. (See page 7 for “How to Make Coconut Milk (*Santan*)”.)

chilli

See page 8 for “How to Handle Chilli”.

In most recipes, *sambal oelek* can be used instead of fresh chilli, in the same quantity.

To prepare a fresh chilli, halve it lengthwise and remove the seeds. Slice as finely as possible along the length, then slice across the strips.

cloud ear fungus (*kuping jamur*)

This edible fungus, which is also known as black fungus, black Chinese fungus (or mushroom), wood ear fungus, wood fungus, ear fungus, or tree ear fungus, is available in Asian grocery stores and some supermarkets.

***daun salam* (Indonesian bay leaf)**

Daun salam, also known as Indonesian bay leaf, is available in dried form at some Asian grocery stores.

***daun kemangi* (Asian basil leaf)**

Daun kemangi, also known as Asian basil leaf, is available at some Asian and Indonesian grocery stores. It is not the same as the more common variety of basil sold in Australia.

emping

Similar to *kerupuk* (prawn crackers) but made from nuts.

***kemiri* (candlenut)**

Kemiri, known in Australia as candlenut, is available in Asian grocery stores usually pre-shelled. The shelled form provides an immediate explanation for why the name *buah keras* (hard fruit) is used. It is quite difficult to crack the shell without smashing the kernel as well and you need to be careful about the fragments which are sharp enough to cut the unwary. Candlenuts should always be cooked before eating. If candlenuts are not available, macadamia nuts are a good substitute.

kencur

Kencur is a kind of root (like ginger, galangal/*laos* or turmeric), which is available in powdered form in some Asian grocery stores or online.

ketan

See *rice*.



liver, tripe, brains, tongue

These have been included where appropriate, not only because Indonesians regard them as delicacies, but because their use provides cheap, nutritious and unusual meals. For those who have not been brought up to appreciate such delicacies and are not interested in economy, chicken or other meat can always be substituted. Many Indonesians find that liver in Australia toughens more easily in cooking than liver in Indonesia. Chicken liver can be used instead of other kinds.

***laos* (galangal, Thai ginger, *lengkuas*)**

Laos, known in Australia as galangal, is a root somewhat similar to ginger and is available in many supermarkets. It is available in powdered form in Asian grocery stores, and amounts have been given for this form. If unavailable, a small amount of crushed fresh ginger (or powdered ginger) can be substituted.

meat

The meat most commonly used for the original version of most of these dishes is goat or perhaps buffalo. Mutton can be used as a substitute for goat meat but many Indonesians, if they know it is mutton (or even lamb), do not like it. Beef can be used instead of buffalo. Pork is only used by non-Muslims or nominal Muslims and I have not included it in any of these recipes, although it may well be used for *sate Bali* for example. It is possible to substitute veal for chicken in some of the dishes which specify the latter. Rabbit may be used as a substitute for chicken although strict Muslims are dubious about eating rabbit and many Indonesians do not like it. I have also made *rendang* from kangaroo meat, and it was eaten without adverse comment. I felt that “Kangarendang” was an introduction of symbolism into the art of cooking. (Unfortunately, once the symbolism had been pointed out it was no longer acceptable.)

oil/fat

Here I refer to (1) oil (*minyak*) and (2) butter (*mentega*), the first including coconut oil, peanut oil, maize oil; the second butter, margarine, or ghee (*samin*). Where either one or the other is preferable, I have indicated this specifically. On the whole, coconut oil is probably preferable for dishes using coconut milk (*santan* – see below) but the decision depends on preference. Olive oil is too distinctive (and alien) a flavour. Lard is unsuitable, for religious reasons, if Indonesian Muslims are to partake of the food.

onion

The red onion (*bawang merah*) in Indonesia is smaller than the brown onion in Australia, and so it is not always easy to translate amounts. Here, as in most cases, experiment is desirable in light of your own onion preferences. Where a small onion is specified, it would be no more than 2.5 cm in diameter, and a medium onion would be up to about 5 cm in diameter.

***petai* beans**

Petai beans are similar in appearance to broad beans, but have a strong and distinctive smell which has caused them to be known in some places as “stink beans”. They are available in Asian grocery stores.

prawn/shrimp crackers (*kerupuk*)

Kerupuk are thin, semi-transparent wafers which, when deep-fried in hot oil, provide a good accompaniment to any Indonesian meal. They are also a tasty snack for in-between nibbling. Although they can be fried and stored in an airtight container for several days it is probably more economical to fry no more than actually required because once they are fried, they are likely to be eaten – they are very more-ish. For the same reason, it is better to fry them when the children are out.

It is important that the oil (for the non-Muslim lard enhances the flavour) is smoking hot, but not too hot. Ideally, the slices should puff up as soon as they hit the oil. If they sink to the bottom first, the oil is not quite hot enough. If they brown (or turn to a black cinder), it is too hot. They should be drained on paper towel and then transferred to an airtight container until just before serving. (If not, they go soft.)

prawns, dried (*udang kering*)

Udang kering are available in supermarkets and Asian grocery stores. They can be stored indefinitely in an airtight tin.

rice

Australian rice is more highly polished than Indonesian rice so it requires rather more initial washing and less cooking water. The long grain rice is more expensive than ordinary rice, but it is a good party special. In either case 1 cup of rice is approximately 200 g and will triple in bulk during cooking (i.e. approximately 5 cups of cooked rice is 1 kg).

Glutinous rice (*ketan*) is listed in certain recipes and should be used where specified. It is more expensive than ordinary rice, although it looks somewhat similar. If buying it in an Asian grocery store, you may need to ask for “sticky rice” to make sure that you get what you want.

rice sticks

These are a kind of rice noodle, white and very brittle, and made up in flat square bundles (rather than the round cakes of egg noodles).

sambal

A hot spicy kind of pickle served with most Indonesian meals. (See page 77 ‘Sambal’.)

shrimp paste (*belacan*)

This is available in Asian grocery stores and most larger supermarkets. It has quite a pungent smell. If you find it too overpowering, oyster sauce, anchovy paste or fish paste could be used as substitutes.

soy sauce (*kecap*) and sweet soy sauce (*kecap manis*)

Where recipes stipulate sweet soy sauce, regular soy sauce can be used with sugar added (see *sugar* below).

stock

Recipes usually stipulate “stock or water”. Stock can be made quickly and easily by adding 1 chicken or beef stock cubes, or 2 tsp vegetable stock powder to a cup of hot water.

sugar

Palm sugar (*gula jawa*) is readily available in supermarkets or Asian grocery stores, but brown sugar can be used as a substitute.

tauco

Tauco is a paste made from preserved fermented beans, available in jars from some Asian grocery stores.

tauge (mung bean sprouts)

In addition to the uses specified hereafter, mung bean sprouts can be used raw or lightly fried (1–2 mins) in salads or can provide a quick vegetable dish if you slice and fry a few onions in a little oil, add sliced tomatoes and, when both are soft, add the sprouts and warm through, adding salt, black pepper and, if desired, soy sauce. When vegetables are scarce (and even when not), sprouts provide excellent nutritional value for money.

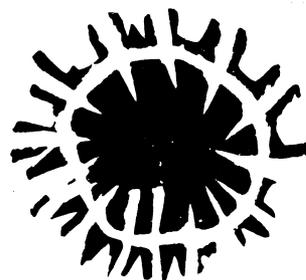
The larger variety – bean sprouts, sprouted from yellow beans – may also be cooked as above, with the addition of about half a cup of water (or stock) after they have been fried for a few minutes. They should then be cooked for another 15 minutes. With the addition of thinly sliced meat strips at the onions and tomatoes stage, a main dish can be whipped up in about 20 minutes.

tempeh

This fermented soy bean cake can be bought in many supermarkets and Asian grocery stores. Cube it, marinate it in crushed garlic, salt and tamarind (*asam*) then fry until it is deep brown.



BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BEGINNER



Equipment:

A Chinese wok (*kuali*) is a good investment. Otherwise a wide, deep frying pan is necessary. For grinding spices and other ingredients, the least expensive equipment is a mortar and pestle. It is quicker and just as effective to use an electric grinder, such a coffee grinder, or a food processor.

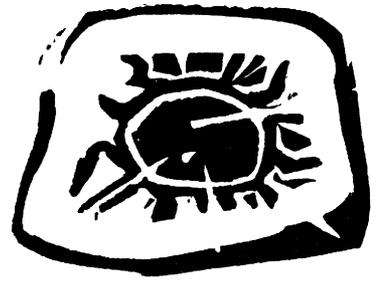
A pressure cooker is recommended for recipes that otherwise have long cooking times.

Spices:

Some of these recipes depend on unfamiliar combinations of familiar ingredients – nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, desiccated coconut, peanut butter. The initial basic ingredients to add would be garlic (either fresh or in a tube), fresh ginger (which can be stored in the refrigerator or by burying the root in the garden, where it may even multiply during storage) and chilli (see page 1 ‘Notes on Ingredients’) and soy sauce.

Coriander and cumin often go together in recipes. Coriander is usually used in greater amounts per recipe than other spices. The connoisseur may prefer to buy the seeds whole and grind their own. Cardamom is more rarely used. Ground galangal (*laos*) and *kencur* powder can be purchased online. Tamarind, tinned bamboo shoots and cloud ear fungus (*kuping jamur*) are also readily available in supermarkets these days.

HOW TO COOK RICE



THIS IS AN ESSENTIAL FIRST LESSON. For most Indonesians, a meal is not a proper meal without rice. There are a variety of names for different kinds of rice – *padi* for rice growing in the field; *beras* for husked rice grains; *ketan* for glutinous rice; and *nasi* for boiled or steamed white rice.

Indonesians adhere to the absorption and not the immersion method of cooking rice, a subject which, in the interests of harmony, it is not advisable to discuss in mixed (i.e. absorption and immersion advocates) company.

Basic method for *nasi putih* (steamed white rice)

Wash the rice in several changes of water until the excess starch has been removed and the water is clear. Drain away as much of this water as possible without tipping out any of the rice and then add 1 cup of water for each cup of rice. Put this in a saucepan big enough to allow for the rice to triple its volume, cover the saucepan tightly and quickly bring the water to the boil. Then turn the heat down very low and cook until each grain of rice is tender – i.e. until a grain rubbed between the thumb and forefinger has no hard core in the centre. This should take around 10 to 15 minutes, depending on the amount of rice, and other variables.

When the rice is removed from the stovetop, the saucepan with lid still on can be placed on a wet cloth for 4 or 5 minutes. This will prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the saucepan. (Alternatively, any such hard outer “rind” can be dried out and then deep-fried in biscuit-sized pieces, salted and eaten as a snack known as *kerak*.)

These days, washing rice is still recommended unless you are cooking a sticky rice recipe such as *ketan*. A rice cooker simplifies the process but for those who don’t have one, simply use a regular saucepan and follow the instructions for absorption method cooking that are on most rice packets.

HOW TO MAKE COCONUT MILK (*SANTAN*)



COCONUT MILK IS REQUIRED for a great many Indonesian dishes and readymade coconut milk can be purchased almost anywhere these days, but it was not available when the early editions were written. The following instructions remain for keen cooks who wish to make their own *santan*.

* * *

Although the preparation sounds (and is) both tedious and time-consuming, it becomes less daunting with more practice.

Use either freshly grated coconut flesh, desiccated coconut or the commercially available coconut cream. The first is preferred by the connoisseur but involves peril to knuckles and nails in grating the coconut flesh (unless you are cunning and mince it instead). The second is the cheapest method, and the third the simplest.

Basically, the first two methods involve adding water to the coconut flesh and squeezing out the resulting liquid. My own method required for 1 cup of thick *santan* requires 2 basins and 1 fine wire strainer large enough to fit firmly on the top of the basin.

1 grated coconut or 2 cups desiccated coconut

1½–2 cups (400–500 mL) warm water (squeezable temperature)

In one basin I put the coconut; over the other I rest the strainer. I moisten the coconut with a little water from the cup and squeeze the liquid out through the strainer, then I add a further small amount of water to the first basin, return the coconut to that basin, and repeat the squeezing-soaking routine until the water is used up. By adding only sufficient water to moisten the coconut, the greatest possible amount of *santan* is extracted from it.

Excess *santan* can be brought to the boil with a small amount of salt added and then stored for later use.

For coconut cream, simply add hot water to the cream and stir until dissolved. About 85 g to a cup makes thick *santan* and 15 g to a cup thin *santan*. Strain it before adding to the dish.

Notes: 1. *Santan* must be stirred or spooned continuously while coming to the boil or it will curdle. This applies also when reheating dishes that contain *santan*.

2. Once *santan* has been added to a recipe all further cooking should be done with the lid *off*, again to prevent curdling.

HOW TO HANDLE CHILLI

IN A WORD, CHILLIES should be handled cautiously, especially by beginners. There are various kinds of chilli with varying degrees of pungency and cautious experimentation is necessary to determine one's individual level of tolerance. It is also wise to inquire in advance about the chilli tolerance of one's guests before designing the menu. If there is wide range of tolerance – increasingly likely as Australian palates adjust to the great variety of Asian foods now available – use the smallest amount of chilli indicated in the recipe and provide sufficient *sambal* for those who desire it. As a chilli-sensitive guest you cannot rely on Indonesian assessments, particularly if the assessor originates from Minangkabau (West Sumatra), where children have been known to chew chillies in preference to sweets. They cannot imagine an Indonesian meal without any chilli and their definition of “mild” is unlikely to equate with yours.

Fresh chilli (*Capsicum annuum*) requires particular care in handling. Avoid any contact with the eyes, lips, cuts or scratches. Rubber gloves may be advisable for those with sensitive skin and a food processor can be used rather than a mortar and pestle for grinding or pounding. Removing the seeds will reduce the pungency, as will longer cooking. On the whole, the smaller and thinner the chilli, the hotter. Bird's-eye chillies (*cabai rawit – capsicum frutescens*) are small, red or green and very pungent. When green they can easily be mistaken for a spring onion but, speaking for myself, this is an error one does not make twice! You would be wise to omit them until you are a seasoned veteran of Indonesian food.

Although in some dishes sliced chilli is required, in most others it is expedient to replace the fresh chilli with ground preserved chilli (*sambal oelek*), now widely available in supermarkets. This saves time and reduces the risks of handling raw chillies. Some blends are preserved with vinegar and some have added salt. The plainer the better, so check the table of contents on the jar. I have given *sambal oelek* measurements in most recipes. The approximate ratio I have used in any conversions is:

1 chilli = 1 teaspoon *sambal oelek*

But I repeat the initial warning: beginners beware!

Where chillies are important visually, finely sliced red capsicums can be used as a replacement. Where they form the basis of a sauce, the same visual effect can be obtained by replacing some of the chilli with minced capsicums or tomatoes. If it should be necessary (as it used to be in the 1950s and 1960s) to use dried chilli powder as a substitute for fresh, halve the amount indicated in the recipe.

RICE DISHES



NASI GORENG (Indonesian Fried Rice)

This is an excellent way of using up an excess of plain boiled rice and has traditionally been a breakfast dish in Indonesia, using up the rice from the previous day. Australians seem to enjoy it as a luncheon or supper dish. Amounts are variable. If it is to be garnished with sliced omelette (see page 72 Dadar Iris), prepare this first and set aside to cool.

If it is being made in its own right, then it is necessary to have boiled the rice enough in advance for it to have cooled or else the fried rice will turn out gluggy.

4 shallots or 1 medium onion

2 tbsp oil

1 clove garlic, crushed (optional)

1 tsp chilli/sambal oelek

½ tsp shrimp paste

4 cups cooked rice (more or less)

salt to taste

1 tbsp soy sauce (optional)

Dice the onion or slice it thinly lengthwise, heat the oil and fry onion, garlic, chilli and shrimp paste until the onion is soft.

Add the rice and salt and mix thoroughly and constantly, turning until every grain is coated. Add the soy sauce and again mix thoroughly until the colour is even throughout.

Nasi Goreng is usually served with Sliced Omelette (*Dadar Iris*).

Many variations on this standard recipe are possible. Any kind of mince meat or finely sliced raw meat can be added with the onions and spices. (Remember that for Muslim guests pork, ham or bacon would be forbidden.) You can add finely sliced celery; parboiled, well-drained beans, peas or broccoli florets; finely sliced or grated carrot; cabbage; bean sprouts. Leftover cooked meat, finely sliced or shredded, or cooked prawns can be added just before the soy sauce. Peanuts or cashew nuts can be stirred in just prior to serving or used as a garnish. Fried onion flakes (*bawang goreng*), sliced or cubed tomato, cucumber, lettuce or pineapple can also be used as a garnish. (Tomato is too moist to be cooked with the rice.) The omelette can be replaced with a fried egg, one per serve of rice.

NASI KUNING (Yellow Rice)

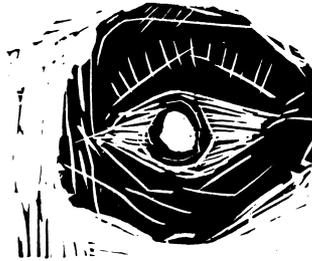
This is used for festive occasions. The simplest form is achieved by adding 1 tsp of turmeric for each 3 cups of uncooked rice and then following the directions for 'How to Cook Rice' (see page 6).

A more exotic dish can be obtained by adding 3 cups of coconut milk to 2 cups of uncooked rice, along with ½ tsp salt, 1 tsp turmeric and, if desired, 1 Indonesian bay leaf, and then cooking in the usual way.

A third version is as follows:

Allow 1 cup of coconut cream to 1 cup uncooked rice.

Wash and drain the rice in the usual way then soak for at least 30 minutes in water to which ½ tsp turmeric has been added. Cook the rice as usual until it is half-cooked. While the rice is cooking bring the coconut cream to the boil with 1 Indonesian bay leaf, ½ tsp galangal, ½ tsp turmeric and ½ tsp salt. Remove from the heat, transfer the half-cooked rice to the coconut cream mixture, cover, allow it to stand for a minute and then continue cooking it over a low heat until all the liquid is absorbed.



NASI DAN BAWANG (Rice and Onion)

(With acknowledgements to Melva and Claudette.)

125 g butter (or substitute)

1 large onion, chopped

1 tsp turmeric (optional)

½ tsp salt

3 cups rice

3 cups boiling water

Heat the butter and add the onion, turmeric, salt and rice. Fry, stirring continuously until the rice begins to change colour.

Add 3 cups boiling water. Turn down heat, cover rice tightly and simmer on low heat for about 20 minutes or until the water is absorbed and the rice cooked through.



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