



Recipes, Cuisine and Customs of Indonesia September 2012

Indonesian Cuisine

Indonesia consists of some 13,000 islands, which stretch from west to east along the equator, from the island of Sumatra, directly south of Thailand, to Irian Jaya, just north of Australia. These islands support the fourth-most populous nation in the world, a population that is 90% Muslim, with hundreds of tribes, subcultures, and languages -- and many long and varied histories. Indonesian cuisine reflects this complex cultural history. Cooking varies greatly by region and combines many different influences. However, most Indonesian food shares the nearly universal food trinity of fish, coconut and chili.

In most of the islands, the staple food is rice. The rice harvest is associated with important rituals: the Javanese, for example, traditionally revere the rice goddess, whose image, fashioned out of rice straw, is carefully placed to protect the harvest from damage.

The main meal in Indonesia is usually served at midday; food which was cooked in the morning is set out all at once. Family members help themselves, serving with a spoon and eating with right hands. There is less family gathering or ceremony of communal eating than in other cultures, but there is communal cooking and a strict hierarchy that determines one's role and comportment at the table. Most meals are built around a cone-shaped pile of the long-grain, highly polished rice that Indonesians prefer. A meal may include a soup, salad, and another main dish. Whatever the meal, it is accompanied by at least one, and often several *sambal* (spice relishes that are mixed with the food). A light meal might consist of rice, some dried fish and a chili sambal.

Indonesian cooking is rich with coconut milk. Beverages, sauces, soups, and even rice are prepared with it. Traditional spicing builds on a base of coriander, pepper, and garlic. Added to those are turmeric, *cassia* (the local bark that is quite close in flavor to cinnamon), bay leaf, star anise, ginger, tamarind, *galangal* (a member of the ginger family), cardamom, lemon grass, scallion, shallots, peanuts, dried anchovies, and prawns. Even ghee finds its way into many recipes. Surprisingly, cloves and nutmeg, flavors at the very heart of the spice trade, play a marginal role, at best, in Indonesian cuisine. They are more commonly used in local medicine.

Indonesian Culture

Indonesian culture is famed for its distinctive traditions of music and dance, as well as its textiles, including ikat (tie-dyed) and batik (wax resist-dyed). Traditionally, textile art — a highly valued cultural symbol as well as a form of clothing — was in most cases the creation of women.

Indonesian Etiquette

Dining etiquette for utensils

In Indonesia, spoons and forks are used (never knives), or no utensils at all (mainly in more traditional Muslim restaurants). If you need to cut things, use the side of your spoon first, then move on to the fork, if necessary (most foods already come pre-cut). Since the spoon is more important than the fork, if you are right-handed, keep the spoon in your right hand and put it down to switch to the fork if you need it.

Dining etiquette for using your hands

Wash your hands before and after you eat. Use your right hand when picking up and eating food, never your left hand. Keep your left hand at your side. Do not place your left hand on the table, and do not pass food with your left hand. When eating "banana-leaf" food, reach into the rice, take some with your fingers, gently roll it between your index and middle fingers and thumb into a self-sticking ball, dip it into the sauce, and mix it with a vegetable or a piece of chicken, then pop the whole thing in your mouth.

Dining etiquette for seating

Men and women may be asked to dine separately. The most honored position is at the middle of the table, with the second most important person seated next. This means that the host will sit at the middle of the table on one side, and the honored guest in the middle on the other side, opposite the host. The honored guest sits on the side of the table farthest from the door. (This is the same at business meetings, with the key people sitting in the middle, flanked on either side in descending order by their aides, with the least important people sitting at the ends of the table farthest from the middle and closest to the door; the arrangement is mirrored on the other side, because the rules of hierarchy demand that everyone must be able to speak with their opposite peers and those who rank below, but those below cannot speak with those above.)

Indonesian Recipes

How to Make a Simple but Still Spectacular Indonesian Rice Table



A lively interplay of tastes, textures, and colors characterizes our simplified version of Dutch-Indonesian *rijsttafel* or Rice Table. This menu, a complete meal for eight, keeps the essence of the original with only a fraction of the work.

Start with a cool salad of brown rice. You add sweet-tart fruit, grilled beef satay, a curried peanut dressing with a touch of chili heat, crisp shrimp crackers, and nuts with dried fruit.

Dutch colonists in what is now Indonesia created the *rijsttafel* known to many Westerners. Based on the native rice table meal, traditionally

a part of religious celebrations, it was expanded into an elaborate show with up to 50 side dishes accompanying a cone of seasoned rice.

Here, you combine elements into just a few dishes. Nearly everything can be prepared in advance; at the last minute, just grill the seasoned beef. Shrimp crackers lend an agreeable crunch and delicate fish flavor to the menu. These small disks are sold in international foods stores; during frying, they expand into airy freeform shapes. You can substitute corn chips if you like.

Indonesian rice salad supper (all recipes follow) includes Brown Rice Table, Beef Satay, Curried Peanut Dressing, Shrimp Chips, Raisins, Cashews, and Coconut as condiments. Serves 8



Brown Rice Table

2 T salad oil
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 medium-size onion, minced
2 cups long-grain brown rice
5 cups regular-strength beef broth
2 dry bay leaves
2 slices fresh ginger (each the size of a quarter)
1 ½ t pepper
4 cups thinly sliced cabbage
2 cups finely shredded carrots
Cilantro Dressing (recipe follows)
Fruits and vegetable (directions follow)
Beef Satay (recipe follows)
Curried Peanut Dressing (recipe follows)

To a 5- to 6-quart pan over medium-high heat, add oil, garlic, onion, and rice. Stir until rice is opaque, about 5 minutes.

Stir in broth, bay leaves, ginger, and pepper. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer until all the liquid is absorbed, about 50 minutes. Using a fork, scrape rice into a 10" x 15" rimmed pan. Let cool completely; remove bay leaves and ginger.

Meanwhile, mix cabbage with carrots. (At this point, you can cover and chill rice, cabbage mixture, dressing, and fruits and vegetable separately up to 2 hours.)

Add dressing to cabbage and carrots; using 2 forks, gently combine with rice. Mound the rice mixture in the center of a large platter. Surround rice with Beef Satay, fruits, and vegetable. Offer Curried Peanut Dressing to add to taste.

Cilantro Dressing

Mix together ½ cup minced fresh cilantro (coriander), ¼ cup minced fresh mint leaves, ½ cup each lime juice and salad oil, and 2 teaspoons sugar.

Fruits and Vegetable

Diagonally slice 2 medium-size firm-ripe peeled bananas. (If fruits and vegetable are to be made ahead, peel and slice bananas just before serving.) Rinse, hull, and halve 4 cups strawberries. Cut 2 medium-size ripe papayas into wedges and scoop out seeds. (Or use 2 ripe mangoes; slice fruit from pit and cut fruit into bite-size pieces.) Diagonally slice one large European-style cucumber.

Beef Satay

3 lb boned beef sirloin or tenderloin (fat trimmed), cut into 1 inch chunks
Satay sauce (recipe follows)

Place beef in a bowl and mix with sauce. If made ahead, cover and chill up to 24 hours. Thread beef evenly on 16 slender, 10-14" long bamboo or metal skewers; reserve sauce. If your grill space is small, cook the beef in successive batches.

Place beef on a lightly greased grill 4 to 6 inches above a solid bed of medium coals (you should be able to hold your hand at grill level only 4 to 5 seconds). Cook for 4 minutes. Brush with reserved sauce, turn, and brush again. Continue to cook until beef is done to your liking (cut to test), 4 to 6 minutes longer for medium-rare.



Satay Sauce

In a small bowl, mix ½ cup lemon juice; ¼ cup soy sauce; 2 T molasses; 1 T salad oil; 3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed; and 2 t ground coriander.

Curried Peanut Dressing

1 cup thinly sliced green onions
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 ½ T fresh ginger, minced
1 T salad oil
1 ½ t curry powder
1 ½ cups water
2/3 cup chunk-style peanut butter
2 T lemon juice
1 T soy sauce
1 T firmly packed brown sugar
¾ t crushed dried hot red chilies

In a 1 ½ - to 2-quart pan over medium heat, combine onions, garlic, and ginger with oil. Stir often until vegetables begin to brown, 8 to 10 minutes.

Add curry powder and stir for 1 minute. Add water, peanut butter, lemon juice, soy sauce, brown sugar, and chilies; stir until mixture boils and thickens. Serve warm or at room temperature.

If made ahead, cover and chill up to 2 days. Return to room temperature to serve; thin with water, if desired.

Shrimp Chips

2 to 4 cups salad oil
8 ounces dried shrimp chips (also called shrimp crackers)

In a wok or 5- to 6-quart pan, heat 1 inch oil to 375 degrees. Add a few shrimp chips at a time and cook until puffy and lightly browned, 30 to 60 seconds. Lift out and let drain on paper towels. If made ahead, store airtight up to 3 days.

Recipe from: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1216/is_n6_v182/ai_7605357/

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Gado-Gado

Gado-gado is one of the well-known dishes from Indonesia. Gado-Gado literally means “*mix mix*” since gado-gado is the plural word of gado, so gado-gado means mixes. In Indonesia, gado-gado is not a salad dish; it is a one dish meal.

Fresh spinach
 Yellow rice (white or brown rice with 1/2 t of turmeric)
 Assortment of veggies such as:
 Broccoli, steamed
 Fresh green beans, steamed
 Red and green cabbage, finely shredded
 Thin slices of carrot, lightly steamed or raw
 Mung bean sprouts
 Soft tofu, cubed
 Hard-boiled eggs, sliced or chopped



You can vary the veggies and their amounts. Also they can be cooked or raw - or some of each. Arrange everything on a platter or on individual plates

- Bed of fresh spinach on bottom
- Yellow rice on the spinach
- Assortment of veggies on the rice
- Tofu and hard boiled eggs on the veggies

Dressing:

1 cup creamy peanut butter
 1 heaping T grated ginger
 1 heaping T minced garlic
 3 T brown sugar
 1 ½ cups hot water
 4 T cider vinegar
 2 T soy sauce
 1 t salt
 Crushed red pepper to taste

Put everything in a blender and puree until smooth. If it's too thick, add a little extra water. Serve at any temperature, drizzled over gado-gado.

Final toppings:

3 T peanut or canola oil
 2 T ginger, thinly sliced
 1 cup onion, finely minced
 12 med cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced

Heat 1 T oil in a small skillet. Add ginger and sauté over med heat for a minute or so, and then transfer to a small bowl. Repeat with onion and garlic, sautéing each separately in 1 T oil (8-10 min for onion; 20 seconds for garlic). Place each in a small bowl.

Place some or all of these toppings on the table with the gado-gado, so each person can liberally garnish his or her own portion

Optional: shredded, unsweetened coconut (lightly toasted), crushed red pepper, slices of lemons, limes, oranges, apples, pineapple

Recipe from: <http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/member/views/GADO-GADO-1231963#ixzz1zrrQvxDr>

Nasi Goreng

The famous Indonesian fried rice. Originally made from leftover rice and eaten as a breakfast dish; now more usually served for lunch or as the basis of a larger evening meal, for example with a rijsttafel. It is very easy to make and won't take more than 20 minutes to prepare.

- 1 ½ cups long-grain rice
- 2 T vegetable oil
- 3 eggs
- 1 onion
- 2 green chilies, Sambal Ulek or Sambal Badjak
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 leek
- 1 t ground coriander
- 1 t ground cumin
- 1/3 lb chicken meat
- 1/3 lb shelled prawns
- 3 T Kecap Manis (Substitute: Combine equal parts soy sauce and either brown sugar or molasses, and simmer until sugar is dissolved)



This dish is best made from cold leftover rice, but you can cook a fresh batch and leave it to cool for at least 4 hours. Beat the eggs and make into an omelet, slice into strips and set aside. Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan. Add the chopped onion, leek, garlic and chilies. Fry until the onion is soft. Add the coriander and cumin. Slice chicken into strips and add with the prawns to the onion mixture. Cook, stirring occasionally, until well mixed. Add the rice, soy sauce, and omelet strips and cook for a further 5 minutes. Decorate with some of the leftover leek and serve hot. Enjoy.

Recipe from: http://www.indochef.com/indo_23.shtml

Laksa Ayam--Chicken Laksa

1 lb boneless chicken thighs, sliced 1/2 thick

5 shallots, chopped

1" piece ginger, peeled and minced

1 stalk lemongrass, white and pale green parts only, thinly sliced and pounded in a mortar

2 red chilies, minced

2 T oil

2 t Madras curry powder

2 cups chicken broth

1 can coconut milk

2 oz rice vermicelli, softened in hot water

8 oz fresh egg noodles, briefly cooked in boiling water

2-4 green onions, thinly sliced

Bean sprouts

Cilantro

Boiled eggs (optional)



Heat a skillet or wok and add the oil. Fry the shallots, ginger, lemongrass, and chilies until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the chicken; cook, stirring, until the chicken becomes opaque.

Stir in curry powder, making sure it is evenly distributed. Pour in broth and coconut milk. Bring to a boil and simmer on low until the chicken is tender and oils begin to separate from the broth.

To serve, place some of the noodles in individual soup bowls. Add bean sprouts. Ladle the hot broth and chicken into the bowls. Sprinkle with green onions and cilantro. Add sliced boiled eggs if you like.

A squeeze of lime, some Sambal Ulek or Sriracha sauce and/or Kecap Manis may be added according to personal taste.

Recipe from: <http://www.foodbuzz.com/recipes/2076860-laksa-ayam>

Bakmi Goreng (Indonesian Fried Noodles)

1 pkg egg noodles (boil in water for 2 minutes)
 5 T vegetable oil
 2 T chopped garlic
 1 leek stalk, chopped
 Cabbage, shredded
 Bean sprouts
 3 T onion, thickly sliced
 1 tomato, diced
 1 T red chili paste
 4 t soy sauce

4 T Kecap Manis (Sweet Soy Sauce – Substitute: Combine equal parts soy sauce and either brown sugar or molasses, and simmer until sugar is dissolved)
 4 T water
 4 scrambled eggs
 Salt to taste
 dash of white pepper
 Fried shallots for garnish



Boil the egg noodles for two minutes. Drain and set aside. Heat the vegetable oil over a med-high heat until the oil looks like it is hot and ready. Add garlic and sauté until the garlic is golden brown. Then add red chili paste, soy sauce, Kecap Manis, water, a dash of white pepper, and add the rest of the ingredients: noodles, vegetables, and scrambled eggs.

Sauté well until all ingredients are mixed well. Add more water if the noodles look dry. Noodles should not be looking too dry. Serve hot with fried shallots as garnish. Ready in 25 minutes - Serves 4

Recipe from: <http://allrecipes.co.uk/recipe/6834/javanese-fried-noodle--bakmi-goreng-jawa-.aspx>

Sayur Lodeh (Indonesian Vegetables in Coconut Curry)

A variety of vegetables are simmered in a milk coconut milk curry to make this popular Indonesian side dish. Also popular in Malaysia – Serves 4-6

3 T oil
2-3 cloves garlic, minced
2 t galangal or fresh ginger, minced
1-3 chili peppers, sliced into rounds
1 piece lemongrass, white part of stalk only, minced
1 t coriander, ground
½ t turmeric
2 cups coconut milk
1 potato, peeled and diced
1 carrot, peeled and sliced into rounds
1 cup green beans, trimmed
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 cup Chinese or Napa cabbage, chopped
2-3 scallions, chopped into 1" pieces
Salt and pepper to taste



Heat the oil in a large saucepan or wok over medium flame. Add the garlic, galangal or ginger, chilies, lemongrass, coriander and turmeric and stir fry for 2 to 3 minutes.

Add coconut milk, potatoes, carrots, green beans and onion and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until the potatoes are almost cooked through, 10 to 12 minutes.

Remove cover and stir in the add cabbage, scallions, salt and pepper. Simmer until the cabbage is just tender, about 3-4 minutes. Adjust seasoning and serve with rice.

Variations

You can substitute other vegetables - add sturdier, longer-cooking vegetables first and more delicate ones in the second simmering. Add some cubed tofu or some shrimp with the cabbage and scallions if you like.

Recipe from: <http://www.whats4eats.com/vegetables/sayur-lodeh-recipe>

Martabak Manis (Sweet Dessert Pancakes)

½ cup flour
¼ cup sugar
½ t yeast
½ t salt
2 eggs
½ t baking powder
¼ cup water
2 T butter
¼ cup good quality chocolate pieces
¼ cup salted peanuts
¼ cup sweetened condensed milk



- Combine first 7 ingredients in a bowl. Adjust water amount to make a slightly runny batter and let sit on the counter for 3 hours. It will thicken up.
- Finely chop the chocolate and the peanuts.
- Spray a nonstick skillet or griddle and cook the batter pancake style (makes 2), flipping once. When cooked, butter the top.
- Pour generous amount of sweetened condensed milk over top and sprinkle with chocolate and nuts.
- Fold in half like a taco. Cut into strips and serve warm.

Recipe from <http://www.food.com/recipe/indonesian-sweet-martabak-217020#ixzz1zOhD54ZD>

Glossary of Indonesian Cooking Terms: <http://www.cuisinenet.com/glossary/indon.html>

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