

Indonesian specialties

At the Indonesia Food And Cultural Festival, you can taste dishes from all parts of the country, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**



Nasi Liwet



A side dish, Satay Lilit Bumbu Bali



Nasi Tumpeng

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TODAY is the last day to sample Indonesian cooking at the Indonesia Food And Cultural Festival in the luxurious and elegant Mosaic at Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur.

The star of the show is undoubtedly chef Kusram Deni of Mandarin Oriental, Jakarta. At 31, he has already travelled to many parts of the world and garnered much experience. As he casts his gaze across the food hall, he says: "All this is like Mama's cooking."

Indonesia Food and Cultural Festival

When: Until today
Where: Mosaic, Mandarin Oriental KL
Lunch is priced at RM88++ per person while dinner costs at RM108++ per person (Sunday to Thursday) and RM128++ per person (Friday and Saturday).
Tel: 03-2179 8881 or email mokul-mosaic@mohg.com
Rating: ★★★★★

Unfortunately, Deni's mother is no longer alive. "She died when I was 14. Since all my sisters were already married and had gone away, I had to learn to cook for my younger siblings. If I didn't, there was no food to eat," he explains with a sad note in his voice.

Taking a deep breath, he starts the tour of the food he's created with a description of the signature dish, nasi tumpeng. He says, "When the festival is launched, they will cut into this rice dish."

Then Mulay Wirana, charge d'affaires of the Indonesian Embassy, cuts off the top of the tower of turmeric glutinous rice to signal the start of the promotion.

When the suggestion is made that Deni has probably been preparing all day for the event, he retorts with:

"From yesterday."

Another challenge he faced was that sometimes, he did not have the necessary ingredients. "I ask for one kind of lime and when I come here, they have other kinds of lime. Some ingredients they just don't have in KL," he laments.

None of these challenges, however, are apparent from the food displayed. Deni highlights a few dishes that seem to be his favourites, such as satay lilit bumbu Bali (spiced satay). The skewers are made of lemongrass.

Then, there are dishes with curious names like mie godog, Jogjakarta (Jogjakarta noodle broth with chicken and prawns), pepes ikan mas

(fish marinated with turmeric and herbs, wrapped in banana leaf and steamed) and gulai nangka (young jackfruit curry).

ON ROTATION

A perusal of the three menus on rotation daily will make you realise that you can taste food from all corners of Indonesia here. There's otak otak (steamed fish cake with the option of chilli or peanut sauce) from Palembang, Sumatra, nasi goreng ikan asin (fried rice with salted fish) from Bandung, Jawa Barat, satay bulalak (grilled lamb with rice cakes) from Lombok and tempe bacem (fermented bean cake in cinnamon and lemongrass broth) from Jawa Tengah.



Gulai Nangka