

Daging sapi Jawa

(Javanese Beef Stew, a traditional sweet curry from Indonesia)

Ingredients (serves about 8-12)

- 2 kg gravy beef or whatever. As a rule -- old, tough and tasty (yeah, like the cook)
 - 2 or 3 large onions
 - 3 bulbs *bawang merah* *** (a smallish red shallot, or use 1 large red onion)
 - 8 - 10 cloves garlic (just peel and whack them flat, no need to chop)

 - 1 tin coconut milk

 - chili -- as much as you want, I add only 2 or 3 unseeded 'birds eye' chilies (the tiny hot ones) in the pot (or a teaspoon of dried chili). Just cut them lengthways and use whole. People can add more later, but most Javanese stews aren't eye-wateringly hot.
 - 1 good tablespoon whole black pepper corns (it seems a lot, but the whole corns are milder)
 - 1/2 cup finely chopped candle nuts *** (also called *buah keridi*. No real substitute, but use brazil nuts if not available.)
 - 1/2 cup desiccated coconut
 - 1/2 - 1 cup raw peanuts
 - 15 kafir lime leaves *** (use them whole)
 - 1/2 stick of cinnamon, broken up lengthways. Use real cinnamon and not cassis bark which is sometimes sold a "cinnamon". Cassis doesn't have much flavour, and is a scroll about 1mm thick (different to the paper thin cinnamon bark).
 - 10 whole cloves
 - 1/2 -1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 - 1 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander or chopped fresh coriander
 - 1 teaspoon coriander seeds ***
 - 1 teaspoon fresh grated turmeric (or 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder)
 - 1 teaspoon grated galangal *** (or ginger)
 - 1/2 teaspoon Thai basil *** (chopped fine)
 - 1 - fresh leomn grass leaves *** or 1 teaspoon lemon grass powder
 - 2 - 3 tablespoons palm sugar *** (or use dark brown sugar)
 - 1/4 teaspoon fish sauce (not too much, it is powerful stuff! Smells worse than it tastes)
 - salt to taste (probably 1/2 teaspoon)
 - 1 tablespoon peanut oil
1. roughly cut the meat into 3-4cm chunks. Don't be too fussy about getting the size even or square, as the different sizes makes the dish look more interesting. Except for the hard lumps at the end of the meat, leave the sinew etc in (it goes chewy and adds more texture)
 2. cut the onions lengthways (so you end up with long segments) about 1cm wide
 3. heat the oil in a 5+ litre pot (cast iron camp ovens are good because they spread the heat evenly and seal the liquid in)
 4. on low heat, release all the spices and peanuts in the oil (1-2 minutes). Don't burn them. If you do, start again.
 5. add the beef and the coconut milk (don't brown the meat). Stir well.
 6. add the onions. Mix well.
 7. add 2 cup water, put the lid on, and slowly cook for a very long time. (either very low flame, or in a slow oven, or covered in a pit of coals). Don't let it boil dry, but try not to stir too much as this breaks the meat up. It takes at least 4 to 5 hours, so avoid the temptation of hitting the gin and tonics at this point unless you want to be a complete mess when you get around to serving up... (trust me, that happens on occasion...)

8. serve with jasmine rice, with extra chili/salt etc if people want it. A good side dish is a cold salad of cucumber cubes, tomato wedges, thin sliced raw cabbage, sesame seeds and a 1/2 teaspoon of sesame oil. Lime juice is also good squeezed over the stew, or some cold chopped tomatoes.

Serves about 8 to 12 people -- just reduce the quantities (except the coconut milk) for less. Can be frozen.

*** these can be found in an Asian grocery. Supermarkets should have everything else.

Rujak

(a traditional hot spicy, salty, sour salad - fantastic at BBQs on hot evenings)

(Rujak = "roo-ja", the k on the end is not pronounced in Indonesian, it just means "do a really hard end to the word")

Ingredients (serves 2-4)

- 1/4 teaspoon sesame oil
- Snake beans (about 250-500g) snapped into 2-3cm lengths
- red onion cut in half and then really finely sliced across - not lengthways (use a Zyliss if you have one, on the 0.75mm setting. The thinner the better.)
- a handful of coconut (the grated one, not desiccated).
- A fist size of hard green mango, or hard green papaya (peeled, then splintered by doing a billion chops at it with a big knife. The thin, uneven chips that fly off are what gives texture to the salad. Traditionally, the man of the house does this job - having a beer on the verandah with a huge bush machette!)
- Tamarind pulp, about 1 to 2 tablespoons
- palm sugar (or brown), a palmful (that's about 1/4 cup I guess)
- chilies (maybe 3 or 4 of the small hot red ones)
- water, a few cups

Instructions

1. Water, tamarind pulp, palm sugar, chilies -- boil down until it becomes syrupy. Give the softened chilies a good squish to get all that good stuff out. If it goes too syrupy - add more water (durh)
2. While this is happening, assemble a steel or ceramic bowl full of the beans, onions, coconut and splintered green mango/papaya with sesame oil
3. Pour the boiling syrup through a colander (to strain the tamarind pulp out - it's got a real nasty look and texture in a salad) onto vegetables.
4. Give it a good stir and let cool. When readier to serve add a few handfuls of bean shoots (if you add them when the rujak sauce is hot they go soggy, that's not nice either...).
5. Then let it sit for an hour or so to get the flavours all mixed. Give it all a final squishing by hand when ready to serve - just enough to bust up the beanshoots a bit but not so much as to make them go soft.
6. Add salt to taste. It's meant to be salty, so don't be a whooz. 1/2 teaspoon or so - just add enough to actually taste it, but don't go overboard... you're not preserving the salad for a long sea voyage on a Viking longboat.

Rujak sauce is good with most raw green or white vegetables. Just keep the pieces small and it'll work fine every time.