INDONESIA / WILL'S GOURMET RECIPES

AYAM BETUTU UBUD

Ayam betutu Ubud is a whole village chicken rubbed with bumbu gede, stuffed with cassava leaf, wrapped in palm bark and slow-smoked in rice husks until the meat falls apart. Peppery rather than hot, and worth the long wait.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	45 min	5 h 40 min	6 h 25 min	Involved	Medium

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CHICKEN

1 ayam kampong (village chicken), about 1.5 kg

1 tsp ground turmeric

2 tbsp tamarind pulp, mixed with 3 tbsp warm water

100 g cassava leaves, blanched until tender

Palm bark sheet (pelepah), or banana leaves, for wrapping

Kitchen twine

FOR THE BUMBU GEDE

100 g shallots

40 g garlic

30 g galangal

30 g ginger

30 g turmeric

20 g kencur (lesser galangal)

5 candlenuts

4 red chillies

2 lemongrass stalks, sliced

10 curry leaves

1 tbsp coriander seeds

1 tsp black peppercorns

2 tbsp neutral oil

1 tsp salt

TO SMOKE

A large heap of rice husks, plus some dried coconut husk to light them

TO SERVE

Steamed rice

Sambal matah

Kangkung (water spinach)

METHOD

CLEAN AND SEASON THE CHICKEN

1 Rub the chicken with the turmeric and tamarind and leave it for 15 to 20 minutes, or longer. This cleans the bird.

2 Pound or blend the bumbu gede ingredients to a coarse paste. Rub it all over and inside the chicken.

3 Stuff the cavity with the blanched cassava leaves.

WRAP

4 Lay the chicken on the palm bark, fold the bark over it and tie the parcel with twine, twisting the ends closed. Banana leaves work if you have no bark.

COOK

5 Steam the parcel for about 40 minutes to cook it halfway.

6 Light a fire with dried coconut husk, bury the parcel in rice husks and let it smoulder slowly for about 5 hours, adding more husks as they burn down. It works like an oven with heat all around.

SERVE

7 Lift out the parcel, unwrap it and let the chicken fall into pieces. Serve with rice, sambal matah and kangkung.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

A home oven version: wrap the stuffed chicken in banana leaf and foil, then roast at 150 C for about 3 hours. You lose the smoke, so add a pinch of smoked salt if you have it.

If you cannot find cassava leaves, use spinach or kale leaves in the cavity.

Make the bumbu gede in a double batch. It freezes well.

Will calls ayam betutu one of his favourite dishes in Ubud, and he makes it the old way: a whole village chicken wrapped in palm bark and smoked for hours in rice husks. It is very different from the soupy betutu of other parts of Bali.He cleans the chicken with turmeric and tamarind, rubs it with bumbu gede, and stuffs...