INDONESIA / BALI UNCHARTED

BRANCUH

Brancuh is a Bali Aga salad from Tenganan: shredded coconut mixed with a cooked, coarsely chopped spice paste, coconut milk, pounded leaves and lemon basil. It is earthy, savoury and naturally sweet from the coconut.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	30 min	15 min	45 min	Medium	Medium

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE BUMBU RAJANG

6 shallots, finely chopped by knife

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

4 red chillies, finely chopped

2 tbsp coconut oil or neutral oil

FOR THE COOKED SAUCE

30 g strong-smelling green leaves, pounded to a coarse paste

200 ml coconut milk

15 g lemon basil (kemangi) leaves

TO FINISH

250 g freshly shredded coconut

Salt, to taste

METHOD

MAKE THE BUMBU RAJANG

1 Chop the shallots, garlic and chillies by hand into a coarse, uneven mix. Do not blend it. The texture is part of the dish.

COOK THE PASTE

2 Heat the oil in a wok over medium heat. Fry the bumbu rajang for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring, until soft and fragrant but not brown.

ADD THE LEAVES AND COCONUT MILK

3 Add the pounded leaves and stir for 1 minute. Pour in the coconut milk and simmer gently for 5 minutes, until the sauce thickens slightly.

4 Tear in the lemon basil and cook for 1 minute more. Taste: you want a clear earthy flavour from the shallot and the leaves.

COOL

5 Tip the sauce into a bowl and let it cool to room temperature.

MIX WITH THE COCONUT

6 Add the shredded coconut and a pinch of salt. Mix well by hand until the coconut is coated and the mixture holds together like a loose porridge.

TO SERVE

7 Serve at room temperature on a banana leaf, with steamed rice and a main dish.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

Lemon basil is kemangi in Indonesia. Thai lemon basil or a mix of basil and a little lemon zest will do.

Will describes the pounded leaf as strong-smelling and earthy. If you cannot find it, pound dark, bitter leaves such as spinach or moringa instead and use a little less.

Use fresh coconut if you can. Desiccated coconut soaked for 10 minutes in a splash of warm water works, but the natural sweetness is lower.

Will is in Tenganan, one of the Bali Aga villages, cooking over a wood fire with Kadek. The dish is brancuh, a salad of shredded coconut bound with a warm, coarsely chopped spice paste.The paste is bumbu rajang. Rajang means chopped, so nothing is pounded smooth. Will chops his own and fries it in oil, then Kadek adds coconut milk...