INDONESIA / WILL'S GOURMET RECIPES

PAPAYA FLOWER AND CASSAVA LEAF SOUP

A Sumbanese soup of bitter papaya flowers and young cassava leaves with chicken, coconut milk, ginger and lemon basil. The trick is salting and blanching the greens.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	30 min	25 min	55 min	Medium	Hot

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE GREENS

100 g papaya flowers

150 g young cassava leaves

1 tbsp salt, for the papaya flowers

FOR THE SOUP

2 tbsp neutral oil

4 shallots, sliced

4 garlic cloves, sliced

20 g ginger, sliced

3 green chillies, bashed

300 g chicken thigh fillet, cut into pieces

400 ml coconut milk

200 ml water

Salt, to taste

A handful of lemon basil (kemangi) leaves

Fried shallots, to serve

METHOD

PREPARE THE PAPAYA FLOWERS

1. Mix the flowers with the salt and leave for 10 minutes. Rinse well, then blanch in boiling water. Repeat once or twice to take out the bitterness. Squeeze dry.

PREPARE THE CASSAVA LEAVES

2. Blanch the leaves in boiling water for 3 to 4 minutes, drain, and repeat once. Squeeze dry and chop.

FRY THE AROMATICS

3 Heat the oil in a pot over medium heat. Stir-fry the shallots, garlic, ginger and half the chilli for 2 to 3 minutes until fragrant.

ADD THE CHICKEN

4 Add the chicken and stir until the surface turns opaque. Pour in the coconut milk and water and bring to a gentle simmer.

SIMMER

5 Add the papaya flowers, cassava leaves and the remaining chillies. Simmer gently for 10 to 15 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through. Season with salt.

FINISH

6 Stir in the lemon basil and serve with fried shallots and rice.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

Papaya flowers are hard to find. Use bitter greens such as mustard greens or chard, and skip the blanching.

Spinach or kale can replace cassava leaves. Blanch them once, briefly.

Lemon basil, or a mix of Thai basil and a little lemon zest, lifts the soup and should go in at the last moment.

Will is in a traditional village next to Nihiwatu, in Sumba. The houses are beautiful: grain stored at the top, rice and corn, the family living and cooking in the middle, and the livestock below. He adds that the naughty husbands go down there too.The dish is a soup of papaya flowers and cassava leaves, with ginger, garlic, shallots, green...