



Howard Hillman's Great Peasant Dishes of the world

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Nasi Goreng

Indonesia

It originated as a peasant dish. Today, it is a popular national specialty.

Pronunciation:

nag-see' go-rehng'

Part 1 Recipe

■ Ingredients

Servings: 4

- **Long grain white rice**
35 centiliters or 1 1/2 cups
- **Small shrimp**
225 grams or 1/2 pound
- **Boneless smoked pork shoulder (or ham)**
225 grams or 1/2 pound
- **Boneless chicken breast**
1 medium sized
- **Peanut (or other veg.) oil**
80 milliliters or 5 tablespoons
- **Eggs**
2 large
- **Thickly sliced white onions**
12 centiliters or 1/2 cup
- **Shrimp paste**
5 milliliters or 1 teaspoon
- **Soy sauce**
5 milliliters or 1 teaspoon
- **Finely minced garlic**
5 milliliters or 1 teaspoon
- **Ground cumin**
2 milliliters or 1/2 teaspoon
- **Ground turmeric**
2 milliliters or 1/2 teaspoon
- **Ground coriander seeds**
2 milliliters or 1/2 teaspoon

- **Thinly sliced green chili peppers**

60 milliliters or 5 tablespoons

- **Diced unpeeled cucumbers**
6 centiliters or 1/4 cup

■ Steps

- 1** Cook the rice (according to package directions) the day before proceeding to step 2. When it has cooled, refrigerate it.
- 2** Remove the rice from the refrigerator 2 hours before beginning step 3.
- 3** Shell and devein the shrimp. Cut the smoked pork into 1 centimeter (or 1/3 inch) cubes and the chicken breast into 1 1/2 centimeter (or 1/2 inch) cubes.
- 4** Heat 60 milliliters or 4 tablespoons of the oil in a very large skillet over moderate heat.
- 5** Beat the eggs. Add them to the hot oil, tilt the skillet so that the eggs form a thin pancake, and fry until the eggs are set. With a slotted spatula, transfer the egg pancake to paper towels; pat it dry. Slice it into long thin shreds and reserve them for step 10.
- 6** Fry the pork in the hot oil for 1 minute, constantly stirring and tossing it. Add the chicken and fry the mixture for 1 minute, constantly stirring and tossing it. Add the shrimp and fry the mixture for 3 minutes, constantly stirring and tossing it. Transfer the mixture to a warm platter.

- 7** Add and heat the remaining tablespoon of oil. Reduce the heat to low to moderate. Sauté the onions for 3 minutes, or until they are golden brown. Stir frequently.

- 8** Add to the onions the shrimp paste, soy sauce, garlic, cumin, turmeric, coriander seeds, and 50 milliliters (3 tablespoons) of the chili peppers. Quickly stir the mixture. Promptly add the rice. Gently break up any rice clumps. Stir in two thirds of the shrimp, pork, and chicken.

- 9** Raise the heat to moderate and constantly stir and toss the mixture in the pan for 2 minutes.

- 10** On a warm serving platter, mound the rice mixture in the shape of a volcano. Artistically garnish it with the shredded egg, arranging the pieces vertically on the slope of the "volcano." Also decorate the mound with the diced cucumbers and the reserved shrimp, pork, chicken, and chili peppers. Serve immediately.

Part 2 Cooking tips

■ Pointers

- **Rice** - Do not overcook the rice in step 1 or it will be too mushy to fry properly. And, unless the rice is cooked at least several hours beforehand, it will be insufficiently dry for the frying step.

- **Chicken Breast** - Remember, the term chicken breast indicates the whole breast rather than just the left or right side.
- **Shrimp paste** - If it is available, use trasi, the Indonesian shrimp paste. If shrimp paste (including trasi) is not available, substitute anchovy paste.
- **Handling chilies** - Handle the chili peppers with caution. Do not touch your eyes when slicing the peppers. Promptly wash your hands, the knife blade, and the work surface when the cutting task is completed.
- **Chili hotness** - Adjust the quantity of chili peppers upward or downward in keeping with your tolerance for chilies.
- **Wok** - If you have a wok, use it in place of the skillet.

■ Serving suggestions

- **Accompaniment** - The most popular accompaniment to nasi goreng is krupek, which are crisp, deep-fried shrimp wafers.
- **Other popular side dishes** - They include sambal (a spicy Indonesian condiment) and roasted peanuts.
- **Beverage** - Wine is not a suitable choice; beer is.

■ Variations

- **Eggs** - Garnish the mound with fried eggs rather than with shredded egg pancake.
- **Other garnishes** - They include mushrooms, sweet peppers, and raw or parboiled green vegetables.
- **Shellfish** - Substitute crab or lobster meat for the shrimp.
- **Leftovers** - If your refrigerator contains a leftover meat (including beef or lamb), consider adding it to your creation.

- **Color** - Give your nasi goreng added color and pungency with coriander leaves.

Part 3 Travelog

Bali is a land of superlatives. Wherever I traveled on this tropical Indonesian island, I encountered enchanting sights: peaceful, palm-lined beaches; steaming volcanoes scraping the blue sky; thousands of family-owned temples adorned with offerings of fruit and flowers; secluded villages consisting of clusters of thatched mud brick huts standing as islands in a sea of verdant rice paddies.

Most of all, I was won over by the Balinese, a people who are immensely generous, attractive and artistic.

The majority of the inhabitants of the isolated villages I visited were dedicated amateurs in at least one art form.

Some created exquisite wood or stone carvings; others painted vibrant folk scenes. Yet others (especially the beautiful-eyed young maidens) danced to the bright, tingling rhythms emanating from small ensembles of flutes, xylophones, and bell-like bronze instruments.

Their purpose was not art for art's sake, as is often the case in most countries, but as one coffee plantation owner told me "to please the many spirits that roam Bali."

The Balinese are culinary artists, too. Their food is full of color and flavor and it is the hottest in the world (even counting such cuisines as Mexican, Ethiopian, Indian, West African, and Sichuan).

Of all the traditional dishes, the most popular is nasi goreng. It originated long ago in nearby Java and literally means, "fried rice." Nasi goreng is more complex than its name suggests,

and there are more versions of it than there are sauces in France. This is one of the best.

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