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A simple but still spectacular Indonesian rice table - recipes

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Minus about 40 dishes, minus hours of work

A lively interplay of tastes, textures, and colors characterizes our simplified version of Dutch-Indonesian rijsttafet or rice table. This menu, a complete meal for eight, keeps the essence of the original with only a fraction of the work.

Start with a cool salad of brown rice. You add sweet-tart fruit, grilled beef satay, a curried peanut dressing with a touch of chili heat, crisp shrimp crackers, and nuts with dried fruit.

Dutch colonists in what is now Indonesia created the rijsttafel known to many Westerners. Based on the native rice table meal, traditionally a part of religious celebrations, it was expanded into an elaborate show with up to 50 side dishes accompanying a cone of seasoned rice.

Here, you combine elements into just a few dishes. Nearly everything can be prepared in advance; at the last minute, just grill the seasoned beef Shrimp crackers lend an agreeable crunch and delicate fish flavor to the menu. These small disks are sold in international foods stores; during frying, they expand into airy freeform shapes. You can substitute corn chips if you like.

Indonesian rice salad supper

Brown Rice Table

Beef Satay

Curried Peanut Dressing Shrimp Chips

Raisins, Cashews, and Coconut

Guava Nectar

For a condiment, mix equal portions of cashews, raisins, and dry coconut.

Brown Rice Table

2 tablespoons salad oil

2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed

1 medium-size onion, minced

2 cups long-grain brown rice

5 cups regular-strength beef broth

2 dry bay leaves

2 slices fresh ginger (each the size of a quarter)

1 1/2 teaspoons pepper

4 cups thinly sliced cabbage

2 cups finely shredded carrots

Cilantro dressing (recipe follows)

Fruits and vegetable (directions follow)

Beef satay (recipe follows)

Curried peanut dressing (recipe follows)

To a 5- to 6-quart pan over medium-high heat, add oil, garlic, onion, and rice. Stir until rice is opaque, about 5 minutes. Stir in broth, bay leaves, ginger, and pepper. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer until all the liquid is absorbed, about 50 minutes. Using a fork, scrape rice into a 10- by 15-inch rimmed pan. Let cool completely; remove bay leaves and ginger.

Meanwhile, mix cabbage with carrots. (At this point, you can cover and chill rice, cabbage mixture, dressing, and fruits and vegetable separately up to 2 hours.)

Add dressing to cabbage and carrots; using 2 forks, gently combine with rice.

Mound rice mixture in the center of a large platter. Surround rice with beef satay and fruits and vegetable. Offer curried peanut dressing to add to taste.

Makes 8 servings.

Per serving, 447 cal.; 6 g protein; 19 g fat; 66 g carbo.; 30 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.

Cilantro dressing. Mix together 1/2 cup minced fresh cilantro (coriander), 1/4 cup minced fresh mint leaves, 1/2 cup each lime juice and salad oil, and 2 teaspoons sugar. **Fruits and vegetable.** Diagonally slice 2 medium-size firm-ripe peeled bananas. (If fruits and vegetable are to be made ahead, peel and slice bananas just before serving.) Rinse, hull, and halve 4 cups strawberries. Cut 2

medium-size ripe papayas into wedges and scoop out seeds. (Or use 2 ripe mangoes; slice fruit from pit and cut fruit into bite-size pieces.) Diagonally slice 1 large European-style cucumber.

Beef Satay

If your grill space is small cook the beef in successive batches.

3 pounds boned beef sirloin or tenderloin (fat trimmed), cut into 1 -inch chunks

Satay sauce (recipe follows)

Place beef in a bowl and mix with sauce. If made ahead, cover and chill up to 24 hours. Thread beef evenly on 16 slender (10- to 14-in.-long) bamboo or metal skewers; reserve sauce.

Place beef on a lightly greased grill 4 to 6 inches above a solid bed of medium coals (you should be able to hold your hand at grill level only 4 to 5 seconds). Cook for 4 minutes. Brush with reserved sauce, turn, and brush again. Continue to cook until beef is done to your liking (cut to test), 4 to 6 minutes longer for medium-rare, Serves 8.

Per serving: 450 cal.; 31 g protein; 33 g fat; 5g carbo.; 594 mg sodium; 107 mg chol.

Satay sauce. In a small bowl, mix 1/2 cup lemon juice; 1/4 cup soy sauce; 2 tablespoons molasses; 1 tablespoon salad oil; 3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed; and 2 teaspoons ground coriander.

Curried Peanut Dressing

1 cup thinly sliced green onions

2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed

1 1/2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger

1 tablespoon salad oil

1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder

1 1/2 cups water

2/3 cup chunk-style peanut butter

2 tablespoons lemon juice

1 tablespoon each soy sauce and firmly packed brown sugar

3/4 teaspoon crushed dried hot red chilies

In a 1 1/2- to 2-quart pan over medium heat, combine onions, garlic, and ginger with oil. Stir often until vegetables begin to brown, 8 to 10 minutes.

Add curry powder and stir for 1 minute. Add water, peanut butter, lemon juice, soy sauce, brown sugar, and chilies; stir until mixture boils and thickens. Serve warm or at room temperature. If made ahead, cover and chill up to 2 days. Return to room temperature to serve; thin with water, if desired. Makes 2 1/2 cups.

