

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What made you want to be a chef? Was it a childhood ambition?

I never thought I would go into cooking. Electronics and Mechanics things are both interest me. So, I started an apprenticeship as an engine drafts man. After 3½ years alone in the office and totally bored, I walked out if this job. Found the next day an open position as an apprenticeship chef, and loved every minute in the kitchen since.

How did you come to Indonesia?

Before Bali I worked for 5 ½ years in Singapore with Hilton and Hyatt. Hyatt then transferred me to Bali and offered me the challenging task to open the Grand Hyatt Bali as Executive Chef.

What does “Bumbu Bali” means?

Bumbu Bali (please note the spelling). Bumbu means spice paste. Whenever we cook a dish, the first thing we do is blending spices. So, every dish has its own Bumbu.

What is the concept of Bumbu Bali – the food and the restaurant? Who designed it?

Bumbu Bali, please find enclosed our Mission Statement, which explains very much what we want to achieve.

I strongly believe that we have today in Bali the only real Balinese restaurant, where diners can enjoy in an authentic Balinese setting the great flavors of our island.

One other main feature is our Cooking Classes, where we teach interested travelers the basics on Balinese cuisine.

What’s special about Bumbu Bali? How is it different from other restaurant?

In Bali, it seems that almost all restaurants serve a similar line of food. A bit of Indonesian, a bit of Italian, a bit of French and then of course Cap Cai.....

We only serve Balinese food, which receives tremendous respond.

Without reservation it can be very difficult to get a seat in the evenings.

Your cuisine has been said to be a Western interpretation of the Balinese cuisine. Can you describe how it is like, and where your main inspiration lies?

In Bumbu Bali, we serve 100% authentic Balinese cuisine. Unfortunately, Indonesian as well as Balinese cuisine is extremely difficult to find (done the right way in a nice environment) and if you find it, then in most cases the dishes are not prepared with a lot of care and pride. Just think about the Indonesian food you find in Singapore in comparison to Chinese, Indian or Thai cuisine. My main inspiration came definitely from the great people of Bali, which helped me to collect all the recipes. To mention one it has to be Bapak Lothar Arsana currently the Executive Chef at the Grand Hyatt in Bali, which to me has to be one of the finest chefs I was ever able to work with. His tremendous knowledge on the cuisine and culture of Bali were instrumental in getting all the recipes done for the book on the Food of Bali, which I wrote and photographed in 1992 (ISBN#0-945 971-96-6).

What is Balinese cuisine?

Fresh, colorful, richly spiced and incredible good. Here in Bali we have access to some incredible fresh products. Similar to Mama Bali, we are at the markets 7 days a week. Vegetables, which we use are harvested the day before. Pigs and chickens are slaughtered the day we use the meat, and fish we purchase personally directly from the fishing boats when they come in.

Spiced: 90% of the spices we use are fresh and not like in Indian cuisine dried, d. Various chilies, galangal, turmeric, ginger, *kencur*, lemon grass and cloves are still soft and fresh.

Fusion: Since the day we opened the restaurant, it was our commitment to present Balinese cuisine in its original form. What we serve today is 100% original Balinese cuisine. I think the only Swiss influence would be the discipline we brought into the cuisine. Then the same recipes, which we have on our website www.indo-chef.com are used in our daily operation. Most important are the basic spice pastes (Bumbu), which must be measured exactly. Once done it will be a guaranty that each dish always tastes the same.

Balinese Food

In Bali it is extremely difficult to find Balinese food unless one is invited into a home or to a ceremony.

In Bali most street food is prepares by Javanese vendors.

Funny enough when I arrived here the Balinese chefs asked me how to prepare their local flavors.

As we had 150 chefs in our team, we had lots of talents available. I then organized a cooking competition among the chefs and asked them to prepare their home flavors. The result was fantastic and I was overwhelmed by the variety of dishes and flavors available. I took then photos of these dishes and scribbled down the basic recipes. Shortly after I meet a publisher, which was interested to produce a book on the food of Bali. Please note that prior to this no other recipes book existed on Balinese cuisine.

This book, The Food of Bali, which was published by Periplus become then the basics in the development of Bumbu Bali. We do follow these recipes and use them in our cooking classes, which we conduct every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Why the CD ROM

Photography and filming is still a very passionate hobby of myself. All the photos on the CD are from myself. The videos are shot and edited by a very good friend from Australia. The CD's contain perhaps the 12 most important dishes on Balinese cooking. Definitely not a Hollywood production, but a production, which explains the dishes in detail and at the same time should bring across the way we feel about Balinese cooking. I very much hope that this little tool will help us to tell the world that Bali has more then just Rice fields and lots of great sights, but also a cuisine which could easily be on the same level as many other Asian cuisines. If we just would find more people which show a little more enthusiasm in this great cuisine. Just think about how much money has been invested into Thai, Chinese, Indian or Malay cuisine. Nobody seems to invest in our great cooking. I think it has also a lot to do with the fact that Asian Chinese are much more business minded then Indonesians. Even here in Bali or Indonesia it is extremely difficult to find good local cuisine in a nice environment.

As a chef, what motto do you live by?

I think to be a chef has to be the greatest profession on this planet. There are very few jobs where you get so fast returns of happiness. The biggest kick to me is the customer, which walks out of the restaurant, takes a picture of our open kitchen, comes to me and says thank you for a wonderful experience. I teach most of our classes as part of our cooking school. Guests share all the same interest, and I look at it as my duty to share with our guests a wonderful part of the culture here in Bali, which only very few visitors ever get to experience.

Where do you see yourself go after Bali?

My future is definitely here in Bali. We will continue to travel with Bumbu Bali, and hoping to participate in many more food festivals around the globe. World Gourmet Festivals like St Moritz, Singapore, Cape Town etc. We continue with our research on Balinese Cuisine and hope to write a lot more recipes on this fantastically tasty cuisine. We are currently working on recipes for cakes and seaweed.