

CHEF ZOOE WONG

Nasi Lun Bawang

When constructing this dessert, I imagined it as a 'bridge' dish - right between the end of all savoury courses and the first sweet course of a tasting menu. It gives an overall impression of sweetness, but has several more savoury flavour components to anchor that sweetness. I include some notes on my thought processes as well as tasting notes.



Tapai

Tapai contributes a complex sweetness and the fermented flavour lends depth to the dessert. The mild acidity also adds interest.

INGREDIENTS

- 200 g Beras pulut (glutinous rice) - rinsed and soaked overnight 50 g water
- Banana leaf, to line the steaming dish
- 2 g ragi starter

1. Rinse the glutinous rice and soak overnight.
2. Drain the rice well and spread evenly on a banana leaf-lined dish. You may also use a lined steamer basket.
3. Pour the water over the rice and steam for approximately 20 minutes, fluffing the rice grains at the halfway point. This helps the rice cook more evenly.
4. Once cooked, fluff the rice and allow it to cool completely.
5. Once cooled, spread out the rice and Microplane the ragi over the top. Mix well to combine (use a wet spatula or spoon).
6. Place in a clean vessel (I prefer a glass or ceramic dish) and cover with plastic wrap. Allow fermenting in a cool, dark spot for approximately 72 hours.
7. When the tapai is sufficiently and properly fermented, it will be a softer texture with the individual grains of rice still discernible in the mixture. There will be a clear liquid around the edges - this is rice wine. The smell reminds me of Chinese sweet steamed rice cakes!



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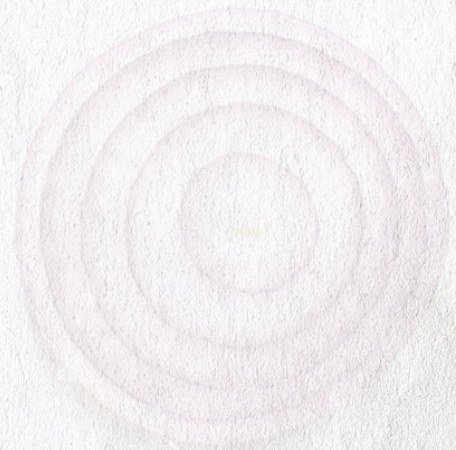
Puffed Rice

This element adds a lovely textural contrast to the rest of the dish and emphasises the flavour of the rice. These varieties of heirloom rice make for the tastiest puffed rice I've ever had. You can use a similar method to puff other grains, but note that some, like wild rice and amaranth, can be puffed from raw.

INGREDIENTS

- 100 g cooked Beras Sia (red heirloom rice)
- 100 g cooked Beras Rumie (black heirloom rice)
- Oil, for frying
- Salt
-

1. Spread cooked rice onto parchment-lined dehydrator trays and dehydrate for approximately 12 hours. Once fully dehydrated, break any clumps apart.
2. Heat oil to 190C - 200C.
3. Fry rice in small batches, agitating the oil lightly as you put the rice into the oil. The rice should puff instantly.
4. Remove from oil, drain and season lightly with salt.



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Toasted Rice Powder

INGREDIENTS

- 100g uncooked Beras Adan (white heirloom rice)
- Rinse rice thoroughly and drain.

1. Spread rice on paper towel to remove excess liquid and allow it to stand for 3 hours till it is dry to the touch. You can expedite this process by using a dehydrator.
2. Toast rice in a sauté pan until deeply golden brown. You may also do this in an oven. Some grains puff slightly during the toasting process, depending on the amount of water that might have entered the grain - this will expose a lighter-coloured interior, which is acceptable.
3. Allow toasted rice to cool.
4. Once cooled, grind to a powder and pass through a fine sieve or chinois. You may do this in a Vitamix. Grind and pass the sifted portion once more to reduce wastage.



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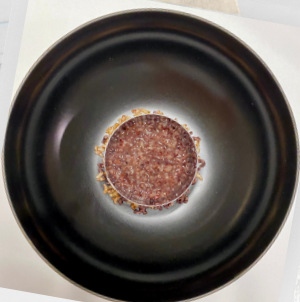
Porridge

A sweet rice porridge was the catalyst for the entire dessert. I was thinking about creamy rice pudding and the Chinese dessert of black glutinous rice porridge. I thought about, and resisted using coconut milk to add richness as I didn't want that to detract or mask the purity of the flavours - as in a Chinese 'tong sui'.

INGREDIENTS

- 250 g Beras Rumie, rinsed and drained
- 800 g water
- 70 g Gula Apong
- 2 g salt
- 3 ea pandan leaves, cleaned and knotted

1. Place rice in a pot with water, add sugar, salt and pandan leaves.
2. Bring to a simmer and cover with a lid (leave the lid slightly ajar - the mixture has a tendency to boil over).
3. Cook for approximately 20 minutes, stirring occasionally until the rice is soft, but the grains still maintain their shape. The texture should be similar to that of a loose risotto. If the rice is cooked and the mixture is still too wet, increase the temperature and stir gently to allow the excess liquid to evaporate. If it is too thick, add a touch of water.
4. Once cooked and at the right consistency, decant onto a tray to allow the mixture to cool quickly.



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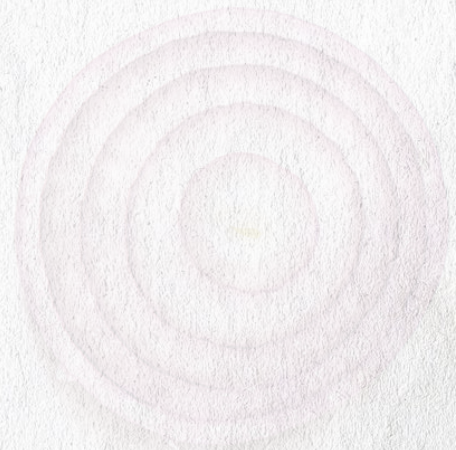
Corn

Blistered corn builds another roasted/toasty flavour component into this dish while lending small, fresh bites of natural sweetness. Wrapping the corn in a banana leaf after it's been blistered allows the corn to cook a little more in a fragrant steam - I wanted the texture to be present and distinctive, but soft enough that it would be complementary to the porridge.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ea fresh corn
- Banana leaf, for wrapping
- Cocktail sticks/toothpicks, to secure the banana leaf

1. Warm the banana leaf over the grill to make it more malleable for wrapping. Set it aside. Blister corn.
2. Wrap the corn in the banana leaf while it is still warm. Allow it to steam in the residual heat for 15 minutes.
3. Unwrap and shuck the corn kernels off the cob, doing your best to ensure the kernels are whole.



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Duan Kudak

As you can imagine, Daun Kaduk adds a herbal and almost savoury finish to this dessert. The slight bitterness highlights all the toasted flavours built into the dish and the crunchy texture and sweetness from the candying technique plays an important role in keeping the flavour tame enough to not overpower the other components..

INGREDIENTS

- 200 g isomalt
- 15 g water Daun Kaduk

1. Dissolve the isomalt as you would with a sugar syrup and continue to cook to 120C. Turn off the heat.
2. Brush the leaves evenly on both sides with this syrup. Work quickly and use tweezers to help you keep the shape of the leaves!
3. Lay the leaves on a Silpat-lined press pan or tray and sandwich with another Silpat and press pan or tray. You can be creative with the weight that you place on top as I was - the flatter you can get it, the neater the end product.
4. Bake in the oven at 150C for approximately 15 minutes.
5. Gently peel the leaves off the Silpat while still warm and lay them on a lightly greased wire rack. They will crisp up as they cool.



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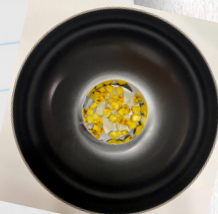


Mochi

The idea behind this was to feature a rice-based dough, similar to those used in a lot of Peranakan and Malay desserts (kuih). I was interested in incorporating a 'qq' texture into the dessert with this element, so a mochi-esque technique seemed like a good way to achieve this using actual rice instead of rice flour. I went through a phase of (purely self-imposed) intense mochi-making during my stint at Nobu and while making it by hand was not feasible for the quantity we were producing and the equipment we had, it was a thought I was excited to revisit. I've used a toasted rice powder here to coat the very sticky mochi instead of a more conventional corn or potato starch (neither of which tastes very nice anyway) and used it as an opportunity to layer in even more rice flavour. The flavour of the toasted rice echoes Ba'kelalan rice coffee and happens to be a flavour I love, reminiscent of the 'farn chiu' in claypot rice or socarrat in a paella.

INGREDIENTS

- 200 g Beras pulut (glutinous rice), rinsed and soaked overnight 75 g water
- 20 g Gula Apong
- Toasted rice powder (recipe below)



1. Repeat the process for cooking the glutinous rice as instructed above for the tapai (this recipe calls for a higher proportion of water). Work the mochi while the rice is still warm. Incorporate the Gula Apong into the warm rice and transfer the mixture to a pestle and mortar.
2. Pound and work this mixture. It will first appear clumpy and unwilling to cohere. Keep at it - it will come together eventually! Once it comes together, you can use a wet spatula to scrape down the sides of the mortar so it forms a singular mass. Work the dough until it is shiny, tacky and stretches almost like a bread dough (think windowpane test).
3. Transfer this dough onto a plate or tray dusted liberally with toasted rice powder.
4. Flatten slightly and coat the top with more toasted rice powder. Allow to stand for twenty minutes to firm up.
5. Cut into long, skinny pieces with a bench scraper and cut into smaller squares using a pair of scissors directly into a bowl dusted with more rice powder. Keep this bowl wrapped in plastic wrap