



De. Wan 1958
by Chef Wan



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SOUL OF MALAYSIA

SERIES 01: THE NORTHERN TABLE

May-June 2026



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A Personal Reflection by Datuk Chef Wan

“Growing up, these were the dishes we never questioned — they were simply part of our everyday lives.

Cooked by our mothers and grandmothers, each recipe carried more than just flavour — it held memory, patience, and love.

Over time, I began to realise that many of these dishes were slowly disappearing. Not because they were no longer good, but because they required time, effort, and a deep understanding of tradition.

For me, this collection is deeply personal. It is about bringing back the flavours I grew up with — and ensuring they are not lost to time.

Because our food is our identity. And every dish we remember... keeps a part of our heritage alive.

With this, I invite you to rediscover the soul of Malaysia.”



— Datuk Chef Wan
Culinary Ambassador of Malaysian Heritage



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PERLIS, Home of the Deities

Ikan Talang Masak Asam Belimbing Buluh

Delicately simmered talang fish in a light, tangy broth, lifted by the bright sharpness of belimbing buluh — offering a clean and refreshing finish.

A STORY FROM THE COAST

Along the northern shores of Peninsular Malaysia, fishing communities once relied entirely on the sea for their daily meals. The morning's catch would return with the fishermen, and whatever was brought ashore would be prepared almost immediately.

In these coastal homes, cooking was guided by what was available. Belimbing buluh, often grown in the backyard, became a natural souring agent — sharper and more vibrant than lime, perfectly suited to balance the richness of fresh fish.

This dish reflects a way of life rooted in simplicity and freshness — where ingredients were not chosen, but trusted.

Today, as modern kitchens favour convenience, dishes like this have quietly disappeared — taking with them the taste of Malaysia's coastal heritage.

FUN FACT

Belimbing buluh was widely used in traditional Malay cooking as a natural souring ingredient, long before commercial alternatives became common.



RM46

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KEDAH, Abode of Peace

Daging Kari Batang Pisang

Slow-cooked beef in a fragrant, spice-infused curry, paired with batang pisang — offering a tender texture and subtle earthy depth.

A STORY OF SUSTAINABILITY

In traditional kampung life, ingredients were never taken for granted. Every part of a plant had its purpose — and the banana tree was one of the most valued.

Beyond its fruit, the batang pisang — the inner core of the banana stem — was carefully prepared and used in cooking. Its mild flavour and fibrous texture made it a natural companion to rich, spiced dishes like curry.

Preparing batang pisang, however, requires time and skill — from peeling and soaking to removing its natural bitterness.

As modern cooking shifted towards convenience, such labour-intensive ingredients gradually fell out of use.

Today, dishes like this stand as a reminder of a time when cooking was guided by patience, resourcefulness, and a deep respect for every ingredient.

FUN FACT

Batang pisang is the inner core of the banana tree, traditionally used in cooking but now rarely seen due to its complex preparation.



RM98

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PENANG, Pearl of the Orient

Ayam Pongteh Penang Lama

Tender chicken braised in savoury taucu gravy, gently balanced with Gula Melaka — delivering a comforting, sweet-savoury depth.

A STORY OF CULTURAL BLENDING

Originating from Peranakan kitchens, Pongteh tells the story of cultural exchange — where Chinese culinary traditions met local Malay ingredients and flavours.

In Penang, a historic trading port, this fusion evolved into a lighter and more delicate interpretation, shaped by the island's unique culinary identity.

Taucu, a fermented soybean paste introduced by early Chinese settlers, became the foundation of the dish — later balanced with gula Melaka, a distinctly local ingredient.

Once a staple in Peranakan homes, Pongteh was slow-cooked and shared among families, allowing its flavours to deepen over time.

Today, as fewer households prepare such dishes from scratch, recipes like this are becoming increasingly rare — remembered more in stories than in everyday cooking.

FUN FACT

Taucu is a traditional fermented soybean paste, widely used for its rich umami depth.



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PERAK, Land of Grace

Gulai Tempoyak Udang Galah

Freshwater prawns gently cooked in a rich, aromatic gulai, infused with the bold tang of fermented durian — creating a deeply layered and distinctive flavour.

A STORY OF RESOURCEFULNESS

In the riverine regions of Malaysia, where durian trees were abundant, communities faced a familiar challenge — what to do with excess fruit during peak season.

Rather than letting it go to waste, the fruit was preserved through fermentation, creating tempoyak — a bold, tangy ingredient that would later define many traditional dishes.

Paired with udang galah, a prized freshwater catch, this dish became a celebration of both river and land — combining richness with sharp acidity in a way that is unmistakably Malaysian.

Over time, as food preservation became less of a necessity, the practice of making tempoyak declined, and with it, dishes like this became less common in everyday dining.

FUN FACT

Tempoyak is fermented durian, traditionally stored and aged to develop its signature sour and savoury profile.



RM76

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CONTINUING THE JOURNEY...

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SERIES 02

July-August 2026

Beyond the northern table lies another chapter of Malaysia's culinary memory — where coastal fires, Peranakan kitchens, Bugis traditions, and smoky village cookery continue to shape dishes passed quietly through generations.

Series 02 journeys through Selangor, Kuantan, Melaka, and Negeri Sembilan — uncovering flavours rooted in migration, resilience, and heritage.



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Celebrating Malaysia, one story at a time.

