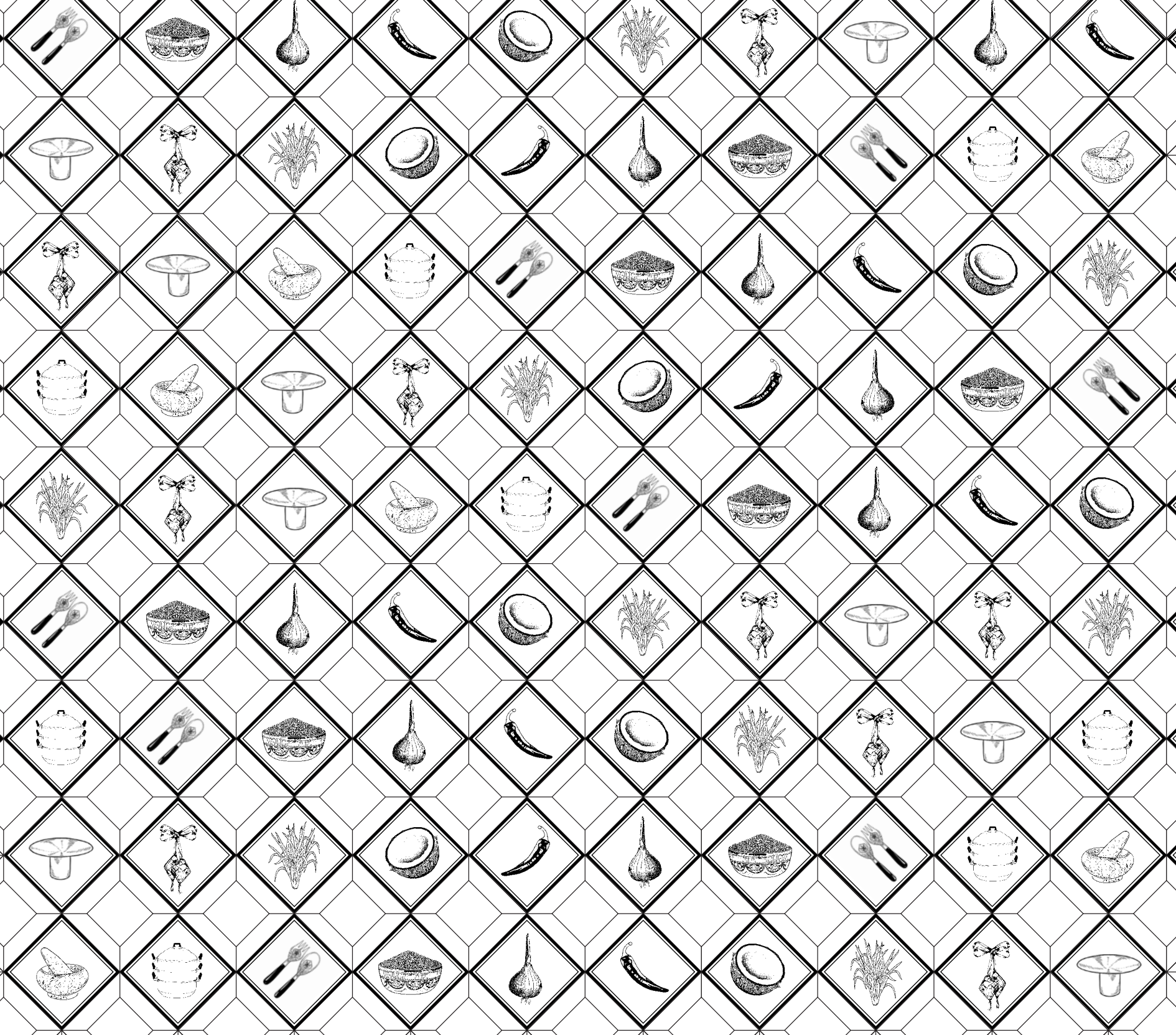


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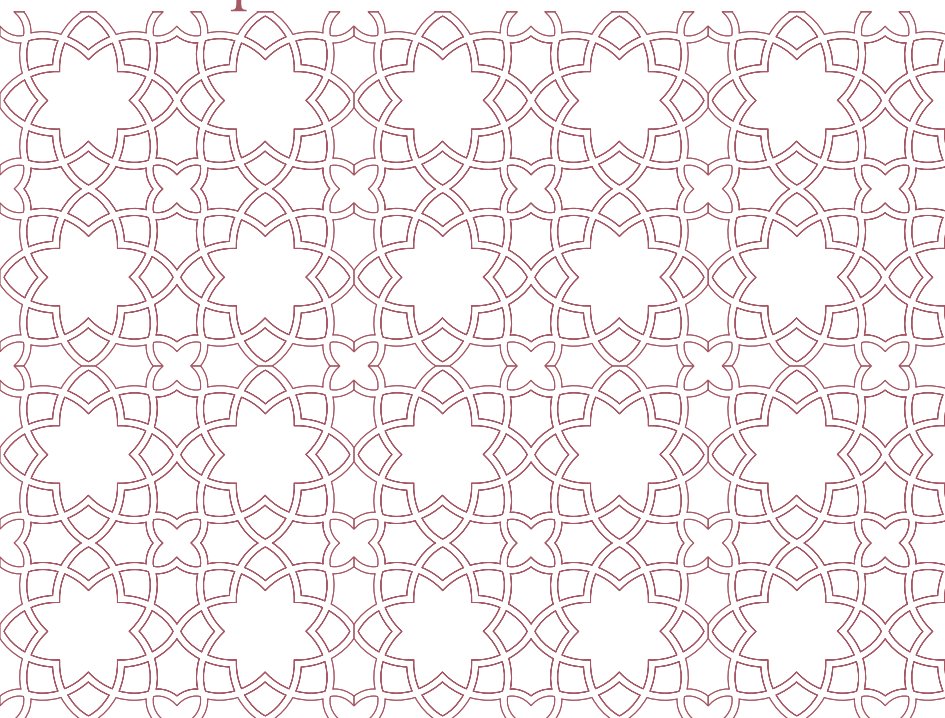


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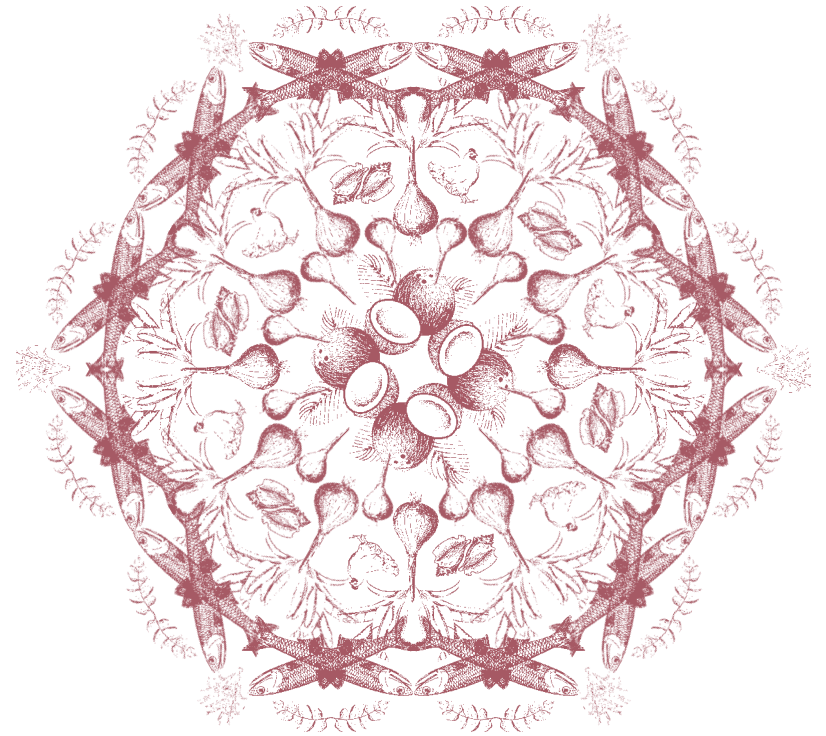


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my mum, my hero



“Whatever you do, it has to be from the heart.”

It is never about expensive ingredients; it has always been about the honesty of taste and flavour.



THIS WAS MY MUM’S MANTRA in life. Her words run true and deep, remaining as relevant today as they were when I first heard them. Mum is now 88, and still particular about what she eats. Her preference for quality food is the only reason she has never bought hawker food for us, and instead, raised us on delicious and wholesome home-cooked meals. Don’t get me wrong; it is never about expensive ingredients. It has always been about the honesty of taste and flavour, no matter how simple and basic the preparation may be.

Mum not only cooks, she does more, a lot more. My knowledge in cooking, sewing, home maintenance, handicraft and even the creation of hantaran (dowry wedding gifting), is my much-treasured inheritance. Wooden planks and a handful of nails in mum’s crafty hands would transform into a low stool (bangku) and shelves in the kitchen and cabinets. Should the wall need a fresh coat of paint, she would get busy on her feet, gingerly balancing her weight on a high stool for those hard-to-reach corners. She is my inspiration in life.

When my dad passed away, she moved forward with a focus on her children. Looking for a replacement father figure in our lives was never on her agenda. To me, she is both mother and father and the best parent anyone could wish for—an absolute pillar of strength for her seven children.

Four years ago, I left the advertising industry to reconnect with myself and reassess my life and goals. During my sabbatical, cooking came back as a constant in my life.

It was as though I had a calling, and I followed my instincts. After two years of cooking as a hobby, I started my home-based catering business. I cook the way my mother had taught me to and the compliments I've received are always heartwarming: "My dad said your cooking brought him back to his childhood days"... "Your cooking replicated my late mother's cooking, and she passed on six years ago"... "Your rendang is how we cook rendang back in our village in Indonesia!"

I remember with much fondness being my mum's little helper—from lugging home the morning's buys to providing her an extra pair of hands for food preparation. I used to loathe it. Like every kid at that age, all I wanted to do was to watch cartoons...

A common sight in the wet market these days is fishmongers scaling, trimming and cutting fish into portions. This was uncommon back then. I had to scale and gut a whole fish piece by piece, and I usually ended up looking like a scaly merman! Once I was done with the fish, it was time to sharpen the knives and get on with the cutting and dicing for the day's cooking, all of which would be watched over with an eagle eye.



My Family

My mum would make kuih twice a month, and my siblings (those gullible enough to be bribed with sweet treats) and I would be sitting on the kitchen floor helping out as though it were playtime. Coconut was bought in chunks and I had to grate them with extra care so as not to cut myself. We learned small but important details, like the correct intensity of the flame for a dry-fry, and even how fast or slow the constant stirring should be.

Mum ran the kitchen like a platoon commander with a booming voice: "TOO THIN", "TOO THICK", "TOO SLOW", "YOU ARE POUNDING TOO FINE—I WANT TEXTURE", "DON'T BE LAZY, ALL FROM SCRATCH, NO CUBE FLAVOURING, IF YOU WANT IT TO BE GOOD, BE PATIENT...DISCIPLINE...DISCIPLINE, DISCIPLINE!!!"

I'm sure that even now, she could command a parade! These very words are and always will be my guiding principle when I cook.

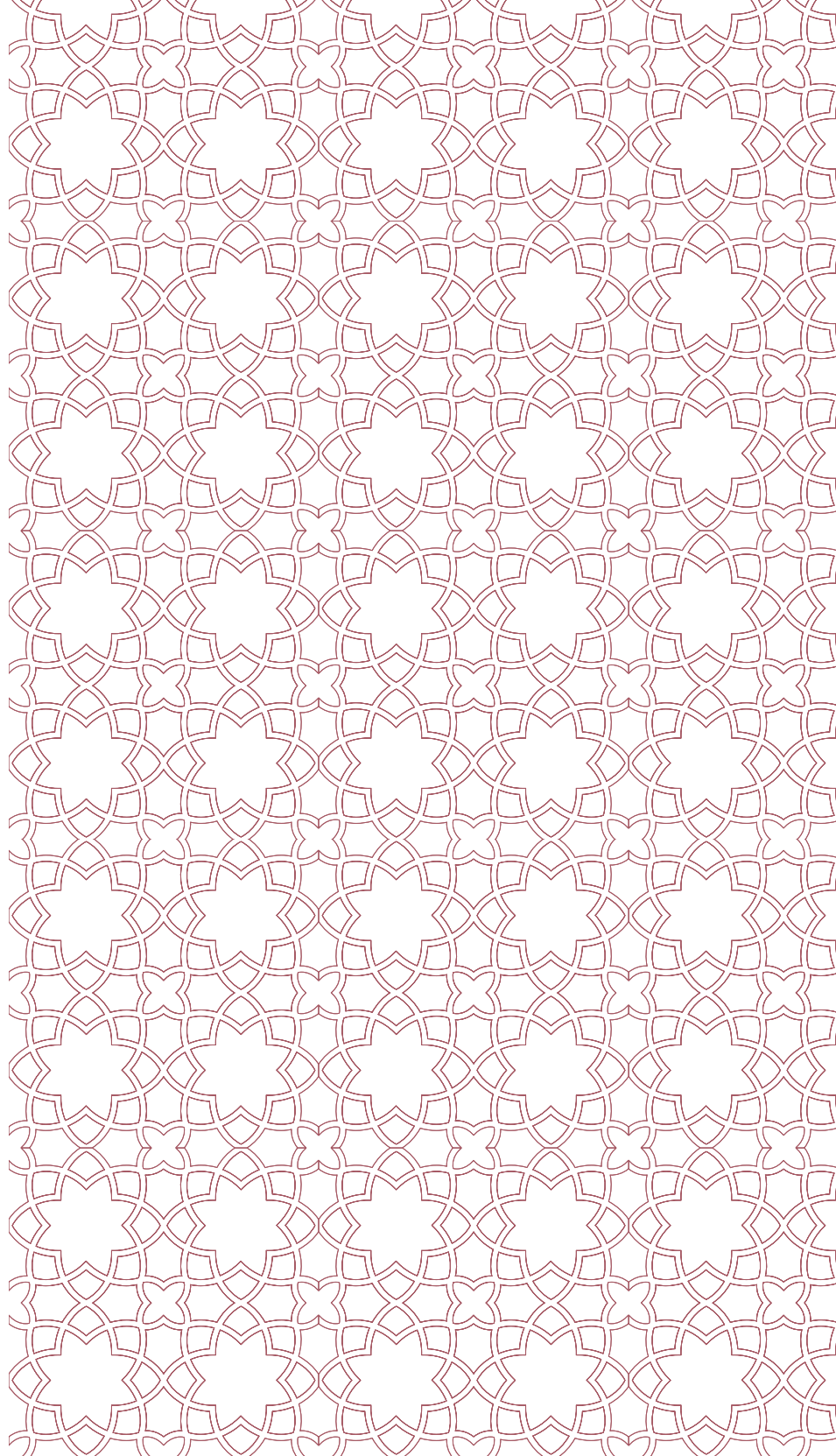
Despite the disdain I felt for the training my mum imparted on us as kids, I now still repeat the very same steps with much appreciation and love. I still use a mortar and pestle and sometimes when I feel nostalgic, out comes my mum's well-seasoned batu giling; the sound and the motion are so

therapeutic. My family heirlooms are not diamonds or gold, but these precious kitchen implements and the wonderful recipes and kitchen lessons bestowed by my dear mum.

I attribute who I am now as a chef to my mum—and to my mum, who believes in always doing the very best possible, I dedicate this book.

Thank you, Mum, for everything.

Anuar Abu



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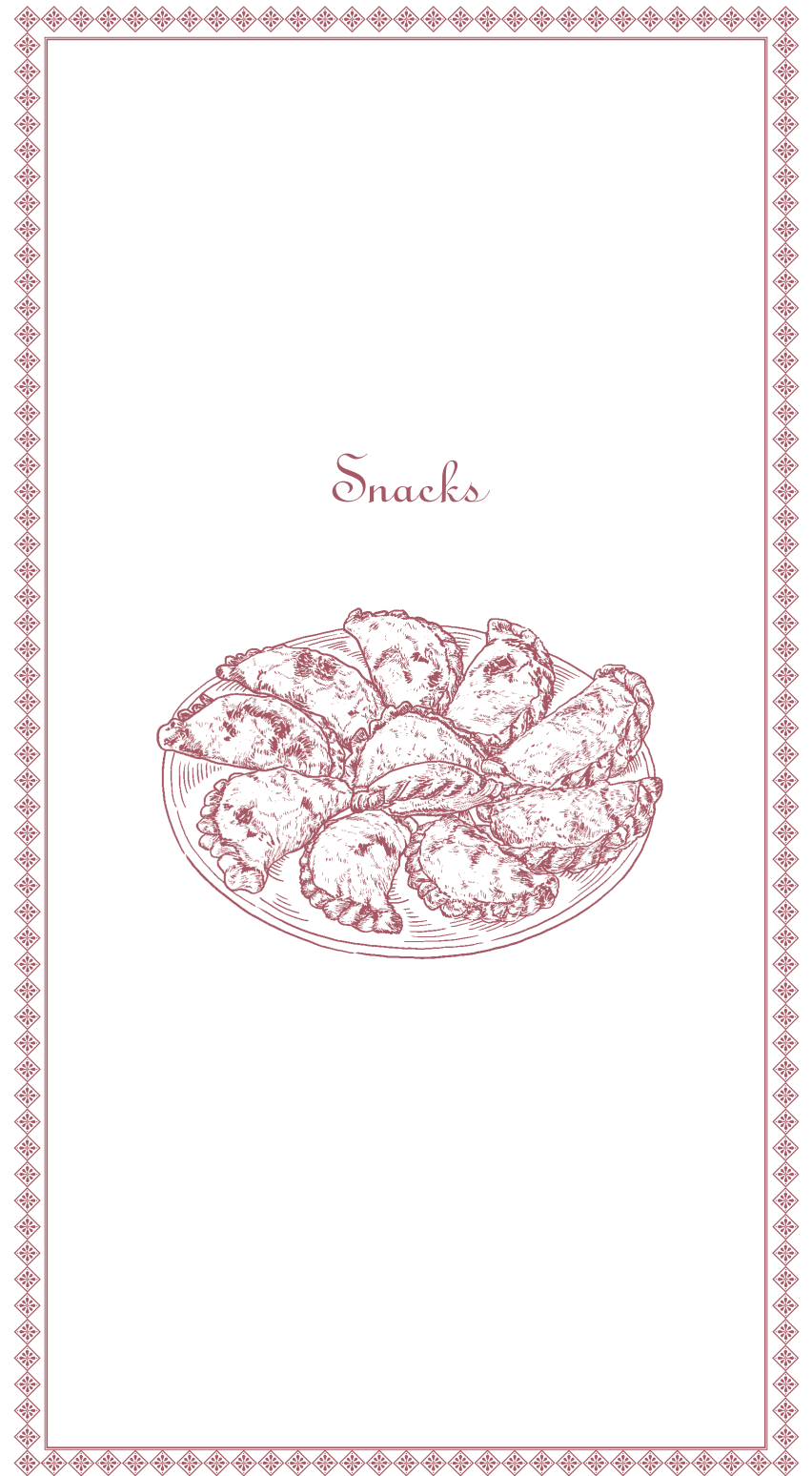
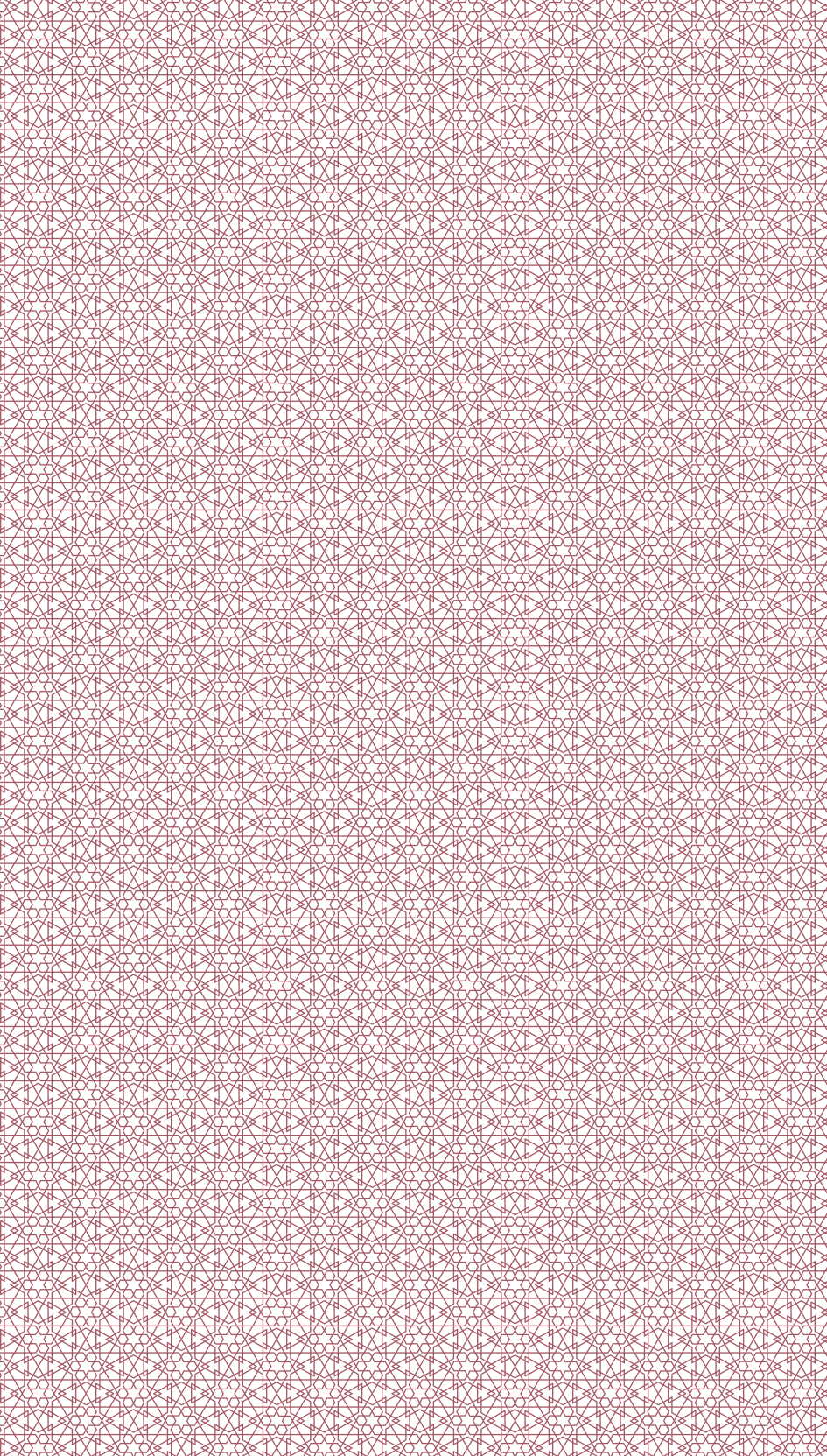
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Snacks



EPOK-EPOK SARDIN

SPICY SARDINE PUFFS

- 8 shallots, thinly sliced
- 30 g garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 red chilli, thinly sliced
- 1 green chilli, thinly sliced
- 3 bird's eye chillies, ground
- 1 tomato, sliced
- 1 large tin sardines in tomato sauce
- 600 g plain flour
- 1½ tsp salt
- 2 tbsps sugar
- 2 tbsps hot oil
- 4 tbsps butter
- 1½ tsp lime stone paste or slaked lime (kapur)
- 150 ml (¾ cup) water

Make the filling. Heat about 4 tablespoons of oil until moderately hot and fry the shallots until lightly golden brown, then add the garlic and chillies. Cook until aromatic, then add the tomato. Remove the bones from the sardines, break the sardines into chunks and add to the pan together with the tomato sauce. Mix well and cook until the gravy has reduced and the mixture is thick and pulpy.

Transfer the mixture to a strainer to remove all the excess oil. The oil must be strained off or the oil will seep through the dough, and you will see oily red patches on the fried epok-epok.

Prepare the dough. Sieve the flour into a mixing bowl, then add the salt and sugar and mix well. Pour in the hot oil and thoroughly combine. Add the butter and mix well again. Stir in the lime stone paste, then add the water bit by bit and knead until the dough is smooth and no longer sticky.

Divide the dough into 25 portions and shape each into a ball. Roll each ball into a circle about 2 mm thick. Place 2–3 teaspoons of filling on one half of the dough and fold the other half over the filling so that the edges of the circle overlap perfectly.

Press the edges tight and crimp the edges with your thumb into neat little folds. Heat enough oil for deep-frying over medium heat and fry the puffs until golden brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels and serve warm.

UBI REBUS SAMBAL IKAN BILIS

BOILED TAPIOCA (CASSAVA) WITH ANCHOVY SAMBAL

- 600 g tapioca or cassava (ubi kayu)
- enough water to submerge the tapioca
- 1 tbsps salt
- 200 g anchovies (ikan bilis)
- 4 lemongrass stalks, bruised

Grind together to a fine paste:

- 18 shallots
- 60 g garlic
- 50 g ginger
- 9 candlenuts
- 3 cm slab shrimp paste, toasted until crisp then crumbled
- enough oil to grind everything together
- 80 g dried chillies, soaked, drained and ground to a paste
- 2 onions, quartered and sliced
- 3 tbsps tamarind pulp, mixed to a paste with a little water and strained
- sugar to taste
- salt to taste

Cut the tapioca into 6 cm sections. Quarter each section lengthwise. Bring the water to a boil, add the 1 tablespoon of salt, then boil the tapioca until tender to the touch and easily pierced with a fork. Remove from the pot, drain well, cover and set aside.

Shallow-fry the anchovies until lightly golden brown, then transfer to a cooling tray lined with paper towels to absorb the excess oil.

To the same pan, add the lemongrass and fry until fragrant. Add in the spice paste and fry until golden brown. Add the chilli paste and fry until the oil separates from the mixture. Add the onions, tamarind, sugar and salt and stir constantly until the oil separates again from the mixture and the colour deepens to a dark red.

The flavour profile should be hot, sweet and tangy. Turn off the heat and allow the sambal to cool down, then add the fried anchovies and give it a good mix. Dish out the sambal and serve with the boiled tapioca.

LEMPENG

COCONUT PANCAKE

- 125 g plain flour
- 125 g freshly grated coconut
- 1 tsp salt (or to taste)
- 130 ml (about ¼ cup) warm water

Thoroughly mix the flour with the grated coconut. Dissolve the salt in the warm water. Pour the warm water into the flour and coconut mixture bit by bit, kneading as you go. The mixture will be warm to the touch. The dough should be compact and on the dry side. Cover with a cloth and let it rest for about 20 minutes.

Divide the dough into 5 equal portions. Shape each portion into a ball and flatten it to a patty of about 5 mm thickness.

Heat a heavy-based pan with a light coating of oil until moderately hot. Cook both sides of each patty until golden brown. Transfer to a platter and serve with Sambal Ikan Bilis (see Ubi Rebus Sambal Ikan Bilis, pg 15).

ROTI BOYAN

POTATO EGG AND ONION STUFFED FRIED BREAD

Filling:

- 600 g potatoes, steamed and mashed
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 egg, lightly whisked
- 1 tsp salt
- a handful of Chinese celery, chopped
- 4 green chillies, chopped
- 1 tsp black peppercorns, crushed

- 600 g plain flour
- 50 ml (¼ cup) oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 220 ml (slightly over 1 cup) warm water

Thoroughly mix all the ingredients for the filling in a bowl. Cover and refrigerate until needed.

Place the flour, oil and salt in a mixing bowl. Add the water bit by bit, kneading as you go, to form a soft and smooth dough.

Divide the dough into 12 equal portions. Roll each portion into a circle 15 cm in diameter. Place 2–3 tablespoons of the filling in the centre and cover with another rolled out circle of dough. Press the edges tight and crimp the edges with your thumb into neat little folds.

Heat enough oil for deep-frying until moderately hot and fry the dough parcels until golden brown. Remove from the oil and drain on paper towels. Serve warm with Sambal Tumis (see pg 75).

SERABAI TELUR

EGG PANCAKE WITH COCONUT SAUCE

- 1 tsp instant yeast
- 1 tsp sugar
- 125 ml (slightly over ½ cup) water, divided
- 200 g wheat flour
- 120 g rice flour
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp salt
- 300 ml (1½ cups) coconut cream

Sauce:

- 400 ml (2 cups) coconut cream
- 100 ml (½ cup) water
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 pandan leaves, bruised and tied into a knot

Mix the yeast and sugar with 25 ml (2 tablespoons) of the water and leave it aside to bloom for about 15 minutes. It should be foamy and increased in volume by then. Sieve both the flours into a mixing bowl and add the risen yeast mixture to the flour mixture.

In another bowl, whisk the egg with the salt until foamy and gradually stir it into the flour and yeast mixture. Mix the coconut cream with the remaining 100 ml (½ cup) water, then gradually stir it into the flour and egg mixture until you have a smooth and pourable batter that is neither too thick nor too runny.

Cover and set aside the batter for an hour or until the surface of the batter is covered with bubbles. Set a pan over medium heat and glaze the surface with oil.

Pour the batter into the pan according to the desired size of pancakes. Cook until the pancake edges are firm, the surface is covered in bubbles and the bottom is golden brown. Flip it over and cook the other side until golden too. Place the pancakes on a platter, cover and keep warm.

Combine all the sauce ingredients in a pot and stir constantly over low heat until the sauce bubbles. Turn off the heat and let it cool to room temperature before putting it in the refrigerator. Serve the pancakes with the chilled coconut sauce.

KUIH BOM

FRIED SESAME BALLS

- 125 ml (slightly over ½ cup) water
- 150 g granulated sugar
- 150 g palm sugar (gula melaka)
- 3 pandan leaves, bruised and tied into a knot
- 1 coconut, grated
- 300 g glutinous rice flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 130 ml coconut milk extracted from 1 freshly grated coconut (mix the coconut with a little water if necessary)
- 100 g sesame seeds

Make the filling first. Bring the water to a boil, then add the granulated sugar, palm sugar and pandan leaves. Lower the heat to medium and stir until the sugars dissolve and the syrup thickens. Add the grated coconut and stir until the coconut has absorbed all the sugar syrup and the mixture is thick and pulpy. Cover and set aside.

Place the glutinous rice flour in a mixing bowl. Dissolve the salt in the coconut milk and pour it a little at a time into the rice flour, kneading as you go until you have a smooth dough. Divide the dough into 3 cm balls.

Flatten the dough balls, then lay each one within your cupped palm and fill with 1–2 teaspoons of the coconut filling. Bring the edges of the dough together, then pinch to seal completely and roll each ball over a tray of sesame seeds.

Heat enough oil for deep-frying until moderately hot and fry the balls until they turn golden and float to the top of the oil. Remove from the oil and drain on paper towels before serving.

JEMPUT JEMPUT UDANG

PRAWN FRITTERS

- ½–1 tsp salt
- 300 ml (1½ cups) water
- 250 g plain flour
- 8 large prawns, cut into chunks
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 red chilli, thinly sliced
- 1 green chilli, thinly sliced
- a handful of spring onions, thinly sliced
- a handful of Chinese celery, thinly sliced

Dissolve the salt in the water and taste to ensure it is only slightly salty. Place the flour in a mixing bowl then add the water bit by bit to achieve a smooth, thick and slightly sticky batter. Add the prawns, onion, red and green chillies, spring onions and Chinese celery and stir until thoroughly mixed.

Heat enough oil for deep-frying until moderately hot, then drop generous dollops of the batter into the oil and fry until the fritters are evenly golden brown and float to the top of the oil.

Remove the fritters from the oil and drain on paper towels. Serve the fritters with Sambal Kicap Bawang Putih (see pg 76).

ROTI JALA

SAVOURY LACY PANCAKES

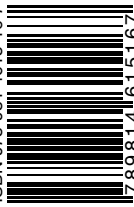
- 150 g plain flour
- 2 eggs
- 330 ml (1½ cups) water
- 140 ml (¾ cup) coconut cream
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp salt

Combine all the ingredients together in a mixing bowl and stir or whisk until you have a slightly runny batter. Sieve the batter to remove any lumps.

Set a pan over medium heat and glaze it with a thin layer of oil. Pour the batter into the pan using a roti jala cup mould and move it around to create a circular lacy pattern. Cook until the bottom is slightly golden brown, then flip it over and cook the other side until slightly golden.

Place each cooked pancake on a platter and cover to keep warm while you cook more pancakes. Fold each pancake into a triangle or quadrant. Alternatively, roll up each pancake like a spring roll. Serve warm with Kari Daging (see pg 166) or your favourite meat curry.

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