



Molten Coconut Pandan Rice Balls

Ondeh Ondeh

The Malaysian Peranakan cuisine is famous for sweet treats. This marriage of the aromatic pandan leaf with deep brown palm sugar and coconut is a harmonious combination familiar throughout Southeast Asia. Each of these tender yet slightly chewy confections oozes rich sugar syrup. Outside, stark white resilient strips of coconut encase the gem. Freshly grated coconut elevates this treat to its highest potential, but the moist unsweetened grated coconut sold in stores is fine. Malaysian and Singaporean cooks color the dough with green coloring for dramatic looks, but I don't. Pandan leaves are available fresh or frozen from Asian grocers. Pandan extract is available online (pg. 362). Making these take a bit of dexterity, just take your time until you get the hang of forming the sugar centered fragrant spherical dumplings.

Makes: About 30 pieces

- 1 cup Finely shredded coconut
- Pinch Kosher salt, ground very fine
- 12 Pandan leaves or 1/2 tsp. pandan extract
- 1 cup Water
- 1 1/2 cups (11 oz. /314 g.) Glutinous rice flour
- 1/2 cup Dark palm sugar (*gula melacca* or *gula jawa*),
grated (pg. 58)
- 6 Banana leaf cups (pg. 353)

- 1.** In medium bowl, combine salt and shredded coconut. Set aside.
- 2.** Make pandan juice: Cut pandan leaves finely, the short way. Combine them in a blender with 1 1/4 cups water, and puree into a smooth liquid, about 30 seconds; strain through very fine mesh sieve to extract all possible juice.
- 3.** Make dough balls: In a mixing bowl, gradually stir pandan liquid into rice flour, working it into a stiff dough. If needed, add additional water to make dough pliable. Roll into tight, small balls, 1 teaspoon each. Use a finger to create a deep well into a dough ball. Fill with a 1/2 tsp. of palm sugar; pinch shut, making sure to create a solid seal. Roll gently in hands to form a round ball.
- 4.** Cook: Bring 2 quarts (2 L.) water to a boil. Add balls gently, stirring after 15 seconds to prevent sticking; cook these dumplings until they float (about three to five minutes). Spoon the cooked rice balls from pot, and deposit directly into grated coconut mixture; roll to coat.
- 5.** Cool to room temperature in a single layer; serve in banana leaf cups or small dishes.



MALAYSIA
SINGAPORE



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Be patient, the dough will come together, just knead it well. This rice flour based dough has a very different feel when compared to wheat dough.



You can use your finger to create the dimple that is filled with the dark brown palm sugar.



Slowly cinch the dough around the sugar to encase it fully. Pinch closed any gaps that remain.



Roll gently to even out the dough and ensure a good seal.



The sugar will liquefy as they boil so do not fret if they implode slightly.



Freshly grated coconut is really worth the effort for these sweet treats.

How and Why

1. When straining the pandan juice, press very hard to ensure the most brilliant green color in the finished dessert.
2. Resting the dumpling after boiling creates the rite balance of chewy-tender dough. The dough firms up as the starches begin to re-crystallize.



Cut the leaves using a plate or bowl as the template, then fold them to pull up edges. This will need to be done in 5 or 6 places to form an actual cup.



Use a stapler to secure the leaf cup, yes, that's what is usually done. If you feel compelled to go all natural, you can use small bamboo skewers or toothpicks.



Feel free to serve other snacks or curries in these banana leaf cups.