

# 10 top tips to cook the Malay way

The diverse flavours are easy to create, says Malaysian chef Norman Musa, co-owner of Ning restaurant in Manchester



**I**f you like Indian or Thai cuisine, you will love Malaysian. As a result of the country's heritage and ethnic composition, Malaysia has incredibly diverse food, ranging from rich Indian-inspired curries to fresh Chinese-inspired noodles and soups. Many of the spices are of Indian or Arabian origin but indigenous fresh roots and herbs like galangal and lemon grass are used extensively and wok-fried dishes are popular among the significant Chinese population. Combined with Portuguese influences, thanks to its colonial past, Malaysia is an amazing melting pot and foodie heaven. It is much easier to cook than people think – take a look at my tips to get started.

## 1 In the cupboard

Make sure you have coconut milk, dried chillies, star anise, cinnamon bark, garlic, ginger and onions. Large dried chillies are used extensively as they give a sweeter, more intense flavour and gorgeous colour. Make sure you soften them first in hot water. This works for dried kaffir lime leaves and curry leaves.

## 2 Cooking with a wok

Before using a new metal wok, throw in a handful of coarse salt and place over a high heat for about 15 minutes. Let it cool then wash. This helps avoid food sticking to the wok.

## 3 Care for your pestle and mortar

Soak a new stone pestle and mortar in cold water overnight to get rid of stone dust.

## 4 Too spicy?

If you put too much chilli in a dish, tamarind juice or coconut milk can help to reduce spiciness.

## 5 Too salty?

If you over-salt your dish, add cubed potato then remove once they soften.

## 6 Chilli hands

Remove the spice from your hands with lime, lemon or tamarind juice. Leave for 2 minutes and then rinse.

## 7 Don't cry

Store onions in the fridge for few hours before cutting to reduce tears.

## 8 Peel easy

It is easier to peel shallots after soaking them in warm water for half an hour.

## 9 Perfect rice

For fluffy rice, soak overnight and the grains will cook evenly.

## 10 Waste not, want not

Freeze fresh lemon grass and galangal by wrapping in aluminium foil. They will keep for several months.

Melting pot... Malaysia has a cosmopolitan heritage



Don't miss these juicy Waitrose British Apricots, in stores early after the sunny weather. Enjoy them on their own, or stone and poach a handful in orange juice until tender and serve warm with ice cream as a delicious dessert.



**3 FOR 2**  
on all dried herbs & spices  
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## FOLLOW THE 5-SPICE RULE

In his new cookery book, John Gregory-Smith aims to demystify the use of spices by limiting the maximum number in a recipe to five. And often his dishes require just two or three.

'Spices are my favourite things. I love talking about them, cooking with them and eating them,' says John, who gave up a job in the City to work in the food industry. Recipes in the book include grilled haddock, apple and coriander Salad with a lemon grass dressing. Try it, you'll be hooked!

**Mighty Spice Cookbook**, published by Duncan Baird, £20, is out today.

## GROUND WATCH

By produce expert  
Alan Wilson



Bad luck Andy Murray... Wimbledon is over, the longest day has passed but, crucially, the number of British-grown lines in stock has not peaked. That comes later.

It's astonishing to think that it is a full four months since we started selling new-season glasshouse salads.

During July, most of the roots like beetroot, parsnips, swede and, of course, potatoes complete their switch to British.

With the Jersey new potato season over, the bulk of our offer are new-season Maris Peers from Suffolk. It is a nice close-textured variety that stands out on the shelf by being very bright and white.

Our job at the supply end is to think ahead as well as deal with the present. So this week I will be discussing with growers their harvesting plans and the prospects for winter crops such as Brussels sprouts.

Thinking ahead is part of farming. Behind each variety is a huge propagation business. In the case of potatoes, several years of multiplication are organised in advance.

We work with our growers – from strawberry to potato producers – to guarantee current season crops, but also to plan for the future. Quantities, varieties, rootstocks and seed need to be considered.

Apart from the fact that forward planning is sensible, it is fair. It is the Waitrose Way get to know and, more importantly, understand the growers that supply us.

One thing that fascinates me is the climate, man's possible influence upon it and the various cycles that determine our weather. June flamed at 30°C, then I got soaked in a thunderstorm before the UK hovered around 18°C for the rest of the last week.

Summers should be hot. I recall living in Kent and the day in July 1966 when England won the World Cup. Now that was a very hot day or was I just excited? Whatever... part of our planning will be a discussion on the UK weather this winter.

But just like the best laid plans, the weather can always throw up something unexpected... See you next week.