



# FPHP HOT & TOUR BULLETIN



## HIDDEN GEMS; MY HOMETOWN

**Newsletter VOL. 1/2025 . ISSN 2231-7422**

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**Hot & tour newsletter  
Feb vol. 1/2025**

**ISSN 2231-7422**

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Hot & tour newsletter  
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ISSN 2231-7422

# TRADITIONAL KALAKATAR DESSERT IN PERAK

PG 5

by

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Perak, a state in northern Malaysia known for its lush landscapes, historic sites, and cultural richness, is home to a lesser-known culinary gem: Kalakatar. This traditional delicacy offers a unique glimpse into Perak's vibrant food culture and is a testament to the state's rich culinary traditions. Despite its relatively low profile compared to more famous Malaysian dishes, Kalakatar represents a significant part of Perak's heritage.

## What is Kalakatar?

Kuih Kalakatar is a traditional dessert associated most with the Banjar community in Malaysia, especially the northern part of Perak where there is a huge population of Banjar people. Kuih Kalakatar is not commonly found in Malaysia except at places with a huge Banjar population, like Kerian district of Perak.

**Kuih Kalakatar is basically a coconut-flavoured cake with custard-like texture and is a traditional dessert popular among the Banjar community, particularly during festive seasons like Ramadhan.**

During Ramadan month, this kuih is made especially to be eaten before and after fasting.

It is made from grated young coconut, flour, sugar, and eggs, mixed and baked until it forms a firm yet moist cake. The origin of the name is not officially documented. Some speculated that the name "kalakatar" derives from Banjar language, where "kala" means 'time' and "katar" means 'hot', suggesting it should be enjoyed while still warm and soft. This dessert is cherished for its rich, sweet, and slightly tangy flavor, making it a beloved treat among those familiar with Banjar culinary traditions. It is sometimes called Wadai Kalakatar, Bingka Kelapa Muda or just plainly Bingka Kelapa.



## Cultural Significance of Kalakatar

In Perak, Kalakatar is more than just a dessert; it is a symbol of local culinary traditions and communal bonding. The dish is often prepared during festive occasions, family gatherings, and cultural celebrations. Its preparation involves a level of craftsmanship and attention to detail that reflects the value placed on traditional cooking methods in Perak. Kalakatar holds a special place in the hearts of many locals due to its association with home-cooked meals and family recipes passed down through generations. The use of fresh, local ingredients and the traditional methods of preparation underscore the importance of preserving culinary heritage in a rapidly modernizing world.

## Preparing Kalakatar: A Culinary Tradition

The preparation of Kalakatar is a process that combines skill and tradition. Here is an overview of how this traditional dessert

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Hot & Tour Newsletter  
Feb Vol. 1/2025

ISSN 2231-7422





is typically made; kuih Kalakatar is quite easy and straightforward to make. Fresh coconut water is mixed with flour (plain flour, rice flour or a combination of both), eggs, sugar and salt to form a batter. Milk and vanilla essence are sometimes added to the batter for a more complex flavour. Once the batter is thoroughly mixed, it is poured into an oiled mould, and strips of young soft coconut flesh are added. The batter is then baked until the cake firms up and a crust is formed. This kuih can be steamed too.

### The Experience of Enjoying Kalakatar

Tasting Kalakatar is a sensory delight that engages both the palate and the nose. The moment we take a spoonful, the soft, sticky texture of the glutinous rice combines with the rich, creamy coconut milk to create a comforting and satisfying experience. The aromatic pandan leaves and the subtle sweetness of palm sugar add layers of complexity to the dish, making each bite a flavorful journey.

Kalakatar can be enjoyed at local markets, traditional food stalls, and during family gatherings. These settings offer an authentic taste of the dessert, often made using time-honored recipes and techniques. The communal aspect of enjoying Kalakatar enhances the experience, as it is often shared among family and friends, reinforcing the sense of togetherness and cultural pride.

### Kalakatar's Place in Perak's Culinary Landscape

Kalakatar may not be as widely recognized as some of Malaysia's other desserts, but it holds a significant place in Perak's culinary heritage.



It represents the essence of traditional Perakian cooking, characterized by its use of local ingredients and artisanal methods. The dessert's unique flavor profile and cultural significance make it a valuable part of Perak's food culture.

As global cuisine continues to evolve and expand, traditional dishes like Kalakatar offer a glimpse into the lesser-known yet deeply rooted culinary traditions of the region. Its preservation and appreciation contribute to a broader understanding of Malaysia's diverse food culture and the importance of maintaining culinary heritage.

### Conclusion

Kalakatar is indeed a hidden gem within Perak's culinary repertoire, offering a unique and authentic taste of local tradition. Its preparation and consumption reflect the region's rich cultural heritage and communal spirit. For those willing to explore beyond the more widely known Malaysian dishes, Kalakatar provides a delicious and meaningful connection to Perak's culinary past and present. Whether enjoyed at a local market or as part of a family gathering, Kalakatar stands as a testament to the beauty and depth of Perak's traditional cuisine.



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**ISSN 2231-7422**



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