

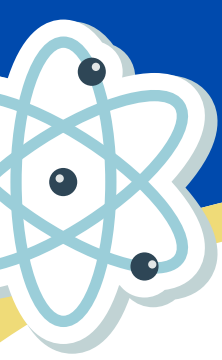


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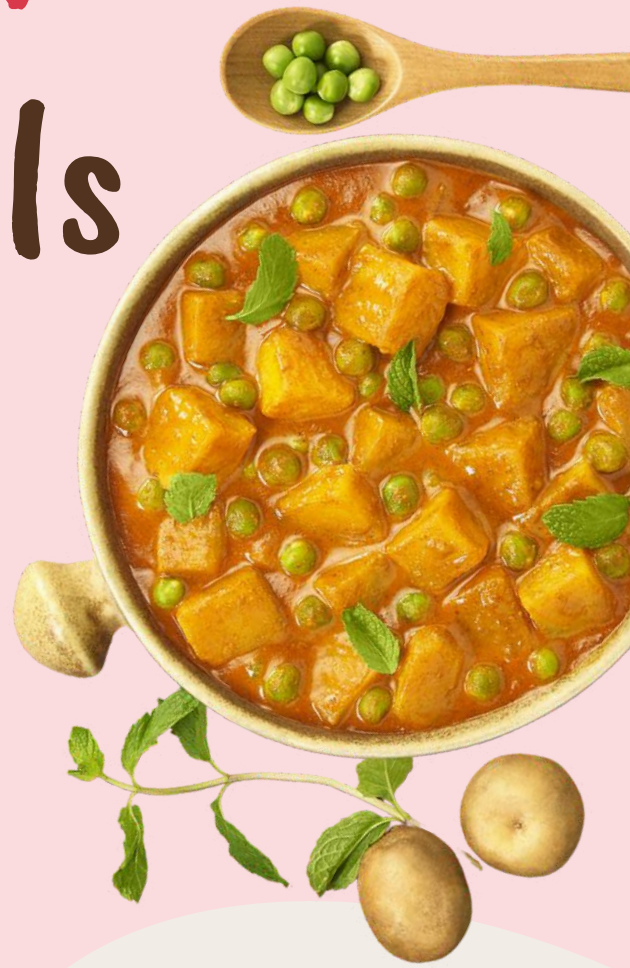
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Head over Meals



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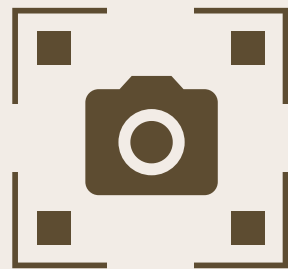


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and order now!

scan the code



Little Chefs in Making

By Che Nooryohana Zulkifli

It's a common concern for working parents to worry about their kids being left at home without food. Some may resort to getting takeout food from restaurants or preparing meals in advance to freeze and reheat later. However, as children grow, so does their appetite, making frequent outside food purchases less practical, especially during adolescence. While cooking and preparing meals early is a viable solution, work demands can often make it seem overwhelming and exhausting. Drawing from personal experience and navigating through similar challenges, I've come to realise that empowering children with culinary skills can be a transformative solution. Instilling a sense of culinary independence in children not only alleviates the strain on parents but also fosters a valuable life skill set for youngsters. Teaching them the basics of meal preparation promotes self-sufficiency and cultivates a deeper appreciation for the effort and thoughtfulness that goes into nourishing oneself and others.

Parents should consider investing in convenient kitchen gadgets such as air fryers and food choppers for an effortless learning journey. I've observed that these appliances excel in expediting the cooking and meal preparation process, particularly when whipping up Malay delicacies like Ayam Masak Kicap and Ayam Sambal. Given children's relatively simple palates, these dishes can be swiftly prepared.

The staple ingredients for Malay cuisine typically include shallots, onions, garlic, and ginger.

Meanwhile, other dishes like Masak Lemak Kuning, Rendang, and Curry may call for additional ingredients like lemongrass, turmeric, and an array of spices such as cardamom, cinnamon stick, clove, fennel, and cumin.

Like what I did with my kids, I began by introducing them to various cooking and baking shows on television. These programs showcase diverse cuisines spanning Western, Asian, Indian, Italian, and Arab dishes.



Watching reality shows such as Masterchef, Chopped, Beat Bobby Flay, Cooks vs. Cons, Baking Impossible, Is it Cake?, Cake Boss, and Buddy vs Duff always ignites excitement in them. They also enjoyed getting creative with Play-Doh, crafting both impressive and less-than-perfect fake food creations. As their interest in cooking blossomed, I started to call my eldest son into the kitchen whenever I prepared meals. Over time, his interest grew, ultimately making my job as a parent much smoother.

So, at the age of 14, my son had already taken up the task of preparing meals, not only for himself but also for the entire family, for instance, Ayam Kicap. The process begins with frying the chicken; a task made convenient and safe with the use of an air fryer. The chicken is marinated with turmeric powder and salt before being placed in the air fryer for 30 minutes at 180 degrees Celsius. While the chicken cooks, he concurrently prepares the gravy ingredients like onions, garlic, and ginger. Here, the food chopper proves invaluable, swiftly chopping these ingredients instead of laboriously slicing them by hand. Once chopped, they're ready to be sautéed. Then, soy sauce and tomato ketchup are added, brought to a boil, and combined with the cooked chicken to create a delicious dish. Similarly, Ayam Sambal follows a similar method and utilises many of the same ingredients as Ayam Kicap, with the addition of chilli paste and turmeric juice for its distinct flavour.

Another simple yet satisfying dish to whip up is fried rice, requiring just shallots and garlic as its main ingredients. Depending on your preferences, additional ingredients can be added to customise the dish to your liking. For instance, if you're a fan of Belacan Fried Rice, sautéing belacan or shrimp paste along with garlic and shallots is essential. On the other hand, for Tom Yum Fried Rice enthusiasts, don't forget to include lemongrass, small chilli, and kaffir lime leaves in the sauté, along with a dollop of tom yum paste for an extra burst of flavour. Unlike more complex dishes like Rendang and Nasi Dagang, these recipes are relatively straightforward, making them perfect for our kids to master. They can not only serve as invaluable helpers in the kitchen but also step in as emergency cooks when we're unavailable due to work commitments or illness.

As my son approaches his 16th birthday this year, I couldn't be prouder knowing that he's adept at preparing a variety of dishes, including Lasagna, Aglio E Olio, and Sambal Tumis Udang. There is only one word to end this article, and I must say it in my mother tongue to get the right feel of it, and it is 'lega'. 😊

