

Entrée: Jakarta

Yenni Kwok

Kedai Tiga Nyonya

Jalan K.H. Wahid Hasyim 73, tel. +62-21 316-0971

Inspired by Peranakan – or nyonya - culture in Singapore and Malaysia, Paul Nio and his wife, Winnie, opened a restaurant that serves Indonesia's own fusion food: Chinese, Indonesian and Dutch. Savour the MSG-free dishes, ranging from grilled fish (100,000 rupiah or HK\$87) and rujak penganten (vegetable salad, 27,500 rupiah) to poffertjes (Dutch batter treats, 15,000 rupiah), amid the elegant decor.

Dapur Babah

Jalan Veteran I/18, tel. 385-5653

Located in a row of refurbished colonial shophouses, Dapur Babah, or Babah's Kitchen, specialises in the cuisines of Javanese-Chinese Peranakan families. It's furnished with the antique collection of owner Anhar Setjadibrata to create the atmosphere of early 20th-century Java. Oen's complete beefsteak costs 60,000 rupiah, and homemade noodles from 50,000 rupiah.

Ragusa

Jalan Veteran I/10, tel. 384-9123

A few doors away is a classical ice-cream cafe boasting that no preservatives are added to its frosty treats. Ragusa, originally opened by Italian brothers Luigi and Vincenzo Ragusa in 1932, maintains a laid-back 1930s air. Guests sit on rattan chairs, while black and white photographs from colonial years adorn the walls and fans whirl on the ceiling. One scoop costs about 10,000 rupiah and a banana split 26,000 rupiah.

Tinoor Asli Manado, tel. 316-2247

Jalan R.P. Soeroso (Gondangdia Lama) 33A

This family-run restaurant is said to be the first Manado restaurant in the capital and serves authentic, home-cooked northern Sulawesi food. Manadonese dishes are piping hot and sour. Try the spiced fish steamed in banana leaves at 20,000 rupiah. Milder dishes include pork with sweet soy sauce and kidney bean soup with pork for 30,000 rupiah each.

Raden Kuring

Jalan Raden Saleh 62, tel. 314-0744

Having catered at presidential palace functions, Raden Kuring serves

predictably superb Javanese and Sundanese dishes. Sit at the edge of the lush garden, facing the fish pond, from where staff catch eels and fish to order. The restaurant is famous for its barbecue dishes, including pecel lele, or grilled eel with fresh vegetables and chilli paste (43,000 rupiah), as well as its outstanding gado-gado (vegetable salad with peanut sauce) for 13,000 rupiah.

Natrabu

Jalan H. Agus Salim 29A, tel. 335-668

Spicy, meat-dominated Padang food from western Sumatra is ubiquitous in Indonesia, and Natrabu is one of its best suppliers. Padang restaurants have a special cooking style (lots of chillies, spices and coconut milk) and a unique style of service. There's no menu, but as soon as you sit at a table waiters will approach with stacks of dishes. Pick those you like and prepare to pay for any you touch. Lunch for two costs from 80,000 to 100,000 rupiah.

The article was published in the South China Morning Post daily (www.scmp.com), 7 February 2007