



# Sarawak food you must try

Let's face facts; hotel food is nice and all, but what's the point in travelling to a new destination and not try the local food in their most authentic form?

That being said, allow us to share with you, dear traveller who's reading this right now, about some of the local fares you need to sink your teeth into while you're here in Sarawak, especially the lesser known ones that you simply must try.

## The must-haves

Every place has its must-have foods. For Sarawak, *Kolo Mee* (a Kuching staple consisting of egg noodles, *char siew* pork slices, minced pork, browned shallots and lard) and *Laksa Sarawak* (rice vermicelli in a spicy and tangy coconut broth) top the list. The latter was even dubbed "Breakfast of the Gods" by celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain.

*Kampua Mee* (Sibu's equivalent to *Kolo Mee*) and *Kompia* (small Foochow buns, often with sesame seeds on top). Ethnic food like *Umai* (raw fish slices marinated in lime juice, onion and chillies) and *Pansoh* (poultry, meat or fish cooked in bamboo) have also earned their place in the list of must-have foods when you're in Sarawak.

## Underrated epicurean gems

Now let's talk about some of the other foods that travellers should not miss out on. First in our list is *Mani Chai*, which is a sweet leaf vegetable often stir-fried with egg. *Mani Chai* with egg is usually eaten with steamed white rice. Another way this vegetable is often enjoyed is to add it to fried vermicelli (*bihun*) or fried rice. The leaves lend a subtle sweetness to the fried vermicelli or rice.

*Kacangma* Chicken is a local Chinese favourite of chicken meat cooked with *kacangma* herbs, also known as motherwort. Traditionally, alcohol is added to the broth, but there are also non-alcohol versions of this dish served in some halal restaurants.

Interesting to try is *Linut*, a Melanau delicacy made by pouring boiling water into a sago flour and room temperature water mixture until it turns sticky and translucent. *Linut* is best enjoyed with fermented durian (*tempoyak*) soup or shrimp paste (*belacan*) *sambal*.

There's eggplant, and then there's sour eggplant. Known locally as *Terung Assam*, the latter is commonly found in soups, along with chicken, pork or smoked fish. Have that with steamed white rice and chances are you'll fall in love with it.

Not known to many Sarawakians is a unique Bidayuh dish called *Asam Siok*. Despite what you might think it means from looking at the first word in its name, this dish has nothing to do with any type of "assam". It is in fact chicken with rice, cooked in bamboo, and is usually served during festive occasions such as Gawai Dayak and Christmas. As the dish cooks, the juices from the chicken are absorbed by the rice to give it a rich meaty flavour, while the bamboo lends a beautiful aroma to the *Asam Siok*. Think one-pot-wonder, but using bamboo instead of a cooking pot.

Last but not least, let's not forget the ever so delicious stir-fried *Midin* with *belacan*, which is a must-try. *Midin* is a local fern that grows abundantly here in Sarawak. Today, the vegetable is served in almost every local restaurant and has become so popular not only amongst the locals but visitors as well.

Now that you've read about these wonderful delicacies, it's time to go on a Sarawak food hunt. Not sure where? Just ask the locals. They will be more than glad to point you in the right direction.

