

The background is a complex abstract composition. It features a map of the island of Bali in a dark red color, positioned on the left side. Overlaid on and around the map are various geometric and organic shapes in shades of purple, blue, and teal. These include concentric circles, wavy lines, a grid of small dots, and a pattern of plus signs. Some of the shapes have numerical labels, such as 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, and 260, which are arranged in a circular fashion, suggesting a compass or a scale. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic, with a focus on geometric and organic forms.

# **BALINESE TRADITIONAL CUISINE: A HERITAGE OF TASTE, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND CONTEMPORARY INNOVATION”**

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# INTRODUCTION

- **Balinese Traditional Cuisine = Cultural Heritage**

Balinese traditional cuisine is not only regarded as food, but also as part of cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation.

- It reflects the philosophy of life balance: the harmonization between humans, nature, and God (*Tri Hita Karana*). The taste of Balinese cuisine is built from *basa genep*, which symbolizes the balance of elements in life.
- Bali's traditional manuscripts that regulates the methods of cooking, the use of spices, and the symbolic meanings of food Lontar Dharma Caruban, which can be understood as the philosophical foundation of Balinese traditional cuisine, including the dish *Betutu*, which continues to be preserved today.



# *DHARMA CARUBAN MANUSCRIPT*

- The Manuscript of *Dharma Caruban* mentioned that the essential spices used in the preparation of Balinese food are imbued with elements symbolizing the cardinal directions, with *Dewata Nawa Sanga* as the manifestation of God who resides in all eight directions of the wind along with their respective colors.
- In the field of *Wayang* (shadow theater), the *Panca Pandawa* as a symbol of virtue can also be represented as the complete *Bebungkilan*, which occupies positions in the four cardinal directions along with their associated colors and life forces.



## SPICES AS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE PREPARATION OF TRADITIONAL BALINESE CUISINE

- The distinctiveness of traditional Balinese cuisine is renowned for its strong and bold flavors.
- This is due to the complexity of the composition that uses various spice ingredients derived from roots/tubers (Bebungkilan), flowers, seeds, stems, bark, as well as blossoms and fruits.
- All these components are combined to create the spice mixture commonly known in Bali as *Base Genep* or *Base Gede*.



## SPICE INGREDIENTS AS SYMBOLS AND THE PLACEMENT OF CARDINAL DIRECTION

- **Cekuh (Kencur/Galangal)** is the symbol (*nyasa*) of Sang Sahadewa, occupying the East direction. Its color is White (*Petak*).
- **Isen (Lengkuas/Greater Galangal)** is the symbol of Sang Bhima in the South direction. Its color is Red (*Barak/Bang*).
- **Turmeric** symbolizes Sang Arjuna in the West (*Pascima*). Its color is Yellow.
- **Ginger** symbolizes Sang Nakula, occupying the North direction. Its color is Black (*Ireng*).
- **Shallot** symbolizes Sang Darmawangsa/Yudhishtira, located in the center (*Madya*). Its color is Multicolored (*Brumbun*).
- **Lemo/Lime** symbolizes Dewi Drupadi, who has the unifying nature that harmonizes all five Pandawa.

# THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *DHARMA* CARUBAN

- **Chicken/Duck Dish with *Basa Genep* ; Betutu** is one of Bali's iconic culinary dishes, usually made with chicken or duck as the main ingredient. It is cooked with *basa genep*, a complete Balinese spice blend consisting of local ingredients such as shallots, garlic, galangal, turmeric, ginger, aromatic ginger (kencur), chili, candlenut, coriander, and lemongrass. The cooking process is carried out traditionally, for example by roasting it in rice husk embers or steaming it for a long time until the spices are fully absorbed.
- **Symbolic Function – Ceremonial Dish;** Betutu often appears in traditional ceremonies, offerings, and special feasts. The dish symbolizes respect for guests as well as for ancestors. Its presence is not just as a delicious meal but also holds sacred status as part of *banten* (ceremonial offerings).
- **Cultural Function – Balance of Flavors;** The *basa genep* in betutu represents a balance of flavors: sweet, salty, spicy, bitter, astringent, and savory. This balance reflects the philosophy of Balinese life, which emphasizes harmony (*Tri Hita Karana*). Thus, betutu becomes a culinary symbol that not only pleases the palate but also carries deep philosophical meaning.
- **Social Function – A Dish of Togetherness;** Betutu is usually served at traditional festivals, village celebrations, or large family gatherings. Its long and complex cooking process makes it a symbol of cooperation and mutual assistance (*gotong royong*). Betutu strengthens social bonds as it is always served and enjoyed together.



# CULTURAL IDENTITY

- **Betutu as a Balinese Culinary Icon;** Betutu has become one of the most well-known Balinese dishes among both domestic and international tourists. Many regions in Bali have their own versions of betutu, such as *Ayam Betutu Gilimanuk*, *Ayam Betutu Gianyar*, and *Betutu Ibu Ray*. Its existence highlights Bali's distinctive culinary identity—deeply rooted in tradition yet adaptable to global tastes.
- **Reflecting Harmony of Flavors and Philosophy of Life;** The distinctive taste of betutu represents the philosophy of balance that characterizes Balinese society. Its unique spices, along with the way it is served and the special occasions on which it is presented, make betutu a symbol that cuisine is a reflection of cultural identity and the Balinese way of preparing food.
- **Recognition by Domestic & International Tourists;** Today, betutu has become a key attraction in Bali's gastronomic tourism. Visitors come not only to enjoy the island's natural beauty and culture but also to savor its authentic cuisine. As a regular feature in food festivals and tourism promotions, betutu stands as an international representation of Balinese culinary heritage.



# MODERN INNOVATIONS

- **Modernization of Presentation (Vacuum Pack, Frozen Food);** In the modern era, betutu is no longer limited to traditional dishes for ceremonies or communal feasts. Today, betutu is produced in practical forms such as vacuum-packed or frozen food, making it suitable as souvenirs or even for export abroad. This innovation allows betutu to be preserved while remaining accessible to younger generations who tend to prefer convenience.
- **Digital Branding and Gastronomic Tourism Promotion;** Social media, culinary vlogs, and digital platforms have become the main channels to introduce betutu to a wider audience. Such promotion highlights not only the taste of betutu but also its philosophy, traditions, and cultural significance, thus elevating it beyond the notion of merely being “delicious food.” Ultimately, betutu has become an essential part of Bali’s gastronomic tourism, uniting culinary experiences with cultural journeys.





# CONCLUSIONS

- **Balinese Cuisine as Heritage and Cultural Identity;** Balinese traditional cuisine is not merely food, but a reflection of the identity of the Balinese people. Betutu, as one of its most iconic dishes, unites history, tradition, religious values, and a way of life passed down through generations.
- **Dharma Caruban as a Philosophical Foundation;** The *Lontar Dharma Caruban* serves as evidence that Balinese culinary traditions are grounded in strong ethical, spiritual, and philosophical values. Through this text, it becomes clear that cooking is not only a practical activity but also a medium for maintaining sanctity and harmony.
- **Betutu as a Concrete Example of a Living Tradition;** Betutu is the tangible embodiment of the teachings in *Dharma Caruban*: the balance of flavors, the symbolic meaning within ceremonies, and its social function as a communal dish. From traditional kitchens to modern restaurants, betutu continues to carry the cultural identity of Bali.
- **Innovation as the Key to Sustainability;** Modernized presentations, creative menu variations, and digital branding have made betutu relevant in the global era. Through continuous innovation, betutu can be preserved and appreciated without losing its traditional roots.



**Matur suksma**