



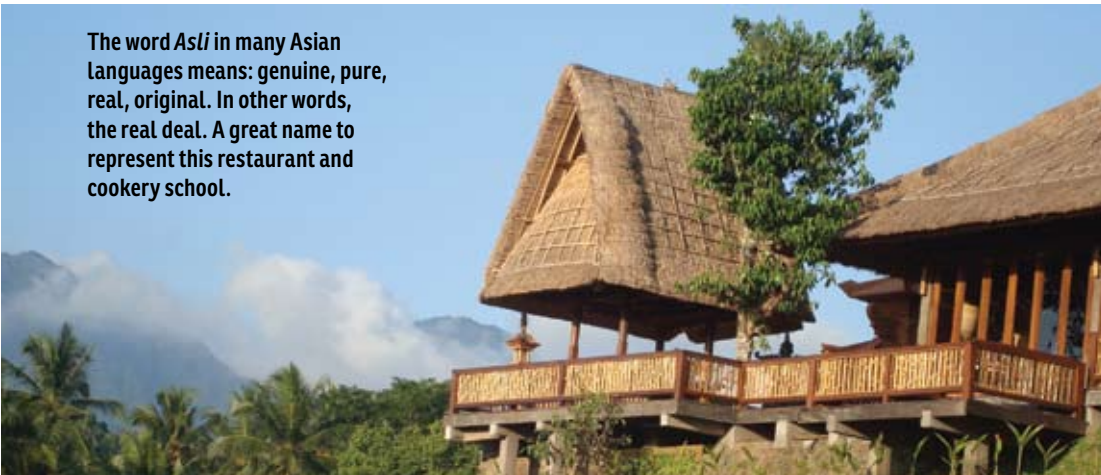
Hidden away from the hype and noisy crowds of Kuta, nestled amongst the foothills of Mount Agung in eastern Bali, is a new business venture from English-born Executive Chef Penelope Williams. Bali Asli opened in July 2011 and consists of a stunning restaurant and cookery school that has a view to die for, with magnificent scenes of rice paddies and of course, the awe-inspiring Mount Agung. "Bali Asli promotes Balinese cuisine and culture without exploiting it or its people," says Penelope proudly. A huge accomplishment for a gifted and talented woman.

The real deal!

WORDS Alison Clarke, IMAGES TJ Images, RECIPES Penelope Williams www.baliasli.com.au



The word *Asli* in many Asian languages means: genuine, pure, real, original. In other words, the real deal. A great name to represent this restaurant and cookery school.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A cooking class at Bali Asli is a must; the *megibung* is served overlooking the spectacular Mount Agung; the verandah of the Bali Asli is a wonderful spot to take in the breath-taking views of paddy fields and Mount Agung; the restaurant has a philosophy of providing wonderful aromatic dishes that are best shared; the grand architecture of Bali Asli.

Mount Agung is a holy mountain and is the home to the Mother Temple of Besakih, the largest and holiest temple in Bali. An active volcano, Mount Agung erupted in 1963. When lava narrowly missed the Mother Temple of Besakih, the locals regarded it as a miraculous sign from the gods.



“Bali Asli will promote Balinese cuisine and culture without exploiting it or its people. We embrace our community, supporting those who fish, farm and forage in the nearby fields, ocean and jungle. I truly believe that I am in Bali for a reason, I’m not yet really sure what it is exactly, but I believe that Bali Asli is part of it”.

~ Penelope Williams, Director and Executive Chef of Bali Asli.

Chef Penelope Williams is no stranger to *Cravings*. She has held cooking classes both in Perth and Cape Lodge in Margaret River and has worked in highly acclaimed restaurants in her second home, Sydney, during the construction phase of Bali Asli.

Bali Asli is no quick venture for this quietly spoken and calm chef. She began her Balinese journey working as Executive Chef at Alila Manggis, located in Candidasa (eastern Bali), for three years. Here she learnt her craft of cooking authentic Balinese cuisine from her co-workers and their families. “I could adapt my training to give these wonderful, aromatic recipes the twist needed to suit the Alila Manggis guests’ palates,” explains Penelope. “The secret to this style of cuisine is to get the balance right – sweet, sour and salty”.

“When I first arrived at Alila Manggis, my staff

had amazing recipes that they were willing to share with me, that were traditional and unique to their own family,” Penelope recalls. “I felt that to be true to them and Balinese cuisine in general, I needed to learn from these people exactly what the heart and soul of each recipe was all about. Once I got a grip on this, then I felt that I had the respect for the cuisine to make it my own.”

About 30 minutes by road from the Candidasa village, Bali Asli is surrounded by rice fields with no other buildings in sight. But what makes this restaurant and cookery school so unique and special is its approach to sustainable authenticity. The food is prepared in a traditional kitchen, using wood-fired mud brick stoves that allow the real flavours of Bali to suffuse. Ingredients are either grown in Bali Asli’s garden, a neighbour’s garden or purchased from the local market – nothing

is imported. “We’ll even be supporting the gentleman down the road who makes his own palm wine,” says Penelope. The ingredients used for both the restaurant and the cooking classes are altered accordingly each season.

Penelope’s vision for Bali Asli is all about experiences. On the menu is the signature *megibung* (meaning ‘sit and share food in peace’) bamboo platter, which features a delicious mixture of *sate*, *timbang* pork soup, *brengek* steamed banana leaf parcels, herb and leaf salads with grated coconut, together with lime, *lawar* and *urab*, and steamed rice.

Cooking up an experience

Penelope has lived and worked all over the world, gaining a collection of invaluable cultural experiences. So you know when she puts her heart and soul into showing something of the heart of a country, it’s going to be the ‘best of the best.’ Her cooking classes are very unique and different. Themed as a ‘Day in the life of’, every class will include an exploration off-the-beaten-track areas and will demonstrate an element of local life, whether it’s learning how to plant rice, guide an ox plough, fish from a *jukung* canoe or make cocktails from cashew nut or palm wine. As well as preparing a memorable meal, students will gather a wealth of inspiration for future experimentation.

Lawar and *urab* are both traditional Balinese salads, with *lawar* usually served as a ceremonial offering. There are four main types of *lawar*: one red with pigs’ blood; two white without pigs’ blood; three green with the leaves of the star fruit tree; and a fourth that’s a mixture of the above three. All *lawar* contains grated coconut, *bumbu Bali*, Bali lime, shrimp paste, eschallot and a little coconut oil and pork meat.

The colours of the *lawar* are important because it’s often used as an offering to specific gods, such as *Siva*, *Brahma* and *Vishnu*, with each god being represented respectively by white, red and black. When it comes to food offerings, however, green is substituted for black, as if you offered black food it would be burnt and that’s not a good look! The mixed *lawar* is symbolic of unity between all gods, demons and living things.

Urab will not normally contain meat, but can be made up of many different combinations of blanched vegetables, including long beans, bean sprouts, young jackfruit, cucumber and baby spinach, along with with grated coconut, *bumbu Bali*, lime, shrimp paste and fried eschallots as a garnish.



FROM LEFT: Traditional Balinese coconut soup; ingredients in a *ulekan*; on the water in a *jukung* canoe; learning about ingredients; guiding an ox plough.



Bumbus are the essence and flavour of all Balinese cooking. Similar to a curry paste, bumbu Bali is used to flavour a variety of savoury dishes.

Ares be siap

(Traditional Balinese coconut soup with chicken and banana trunk)

Serves 4

This is a wonderfully light soup that's full in flavour and not too spicy.

*2kg banana trunk from the young tree (see chef's tip),
300g bumbu Bali (see recipe)
3 sticks lemongrass, white part and crushed
500ml coconut milk (not thick)
500ml chicken stock
1kg chicken thigh meat, skin removed and diced into 2cm cubes
salt and pepper to taste
lemon basil for garnish
2 tbsp shallots sliced, crispy fried for garnish*

- > Slice the banana trunk thinly. Add some salt and massage it into the banana trunk to make it is soft. Leave for 20 minutes and then wash off the salt under cold running water, squeezing the banana trunk dry in a tea towel.
- > Sauté the bumbu Bali and lemongrass in canola or peanut oil until fragrant, add the diced chicken, season with salt and pepper and fry until sealed.
- > Add the chicken stock and bring to the boil. Add the banana trunk (if using) and simmer on a low heat until tender and soft.
- > If not using banana trunk, after the chicken has poached, add the sliced cabbage and celery and simmer until tender but not soft.
- > Add the coconut milk to taste and bring back to the boil.
- > Taste and add more bumbu if needed and stir through half of the fried shallots.

To serve

Ladle into soup bowls, sprinkle with more fried shallots and garnish with the lemon basil.

Chef's tips:

- > Peel off the outer layers of the young banana trunk like peeling a leek or onion. Be careful when you prepare it because the juice stains your clothes and it can never be removed!
- > If a banana trunk is unavailable, substitute for a mixture of Chinese cabbage and celery

Balinese bumbu (bumbu Bali)

Makes approximately 60g

*2 large red chillies
1 small red chilli
3 garlic cloves
3 red shallots
½ candlenut (or several almonds)
1 pinch freshly ground nutmeg
2g fresh ginger
1g fresh turmeric
1.5g fresh galangal
¼ tsp tamarind puree
¼ tsp dark palm sugar
1 tbsp coconut oil (or peanut oil)
1cm roasted shrimp paste
1cm lemongrass
1g kencur (lesser galangal)
1 piece salam leaf (can substitute with fresh curry leaf)
100ml water*

- > Roughly chop all the ingredients. Add the remaining ingredients, excluding the water, to an *ulekan* (a Balinese mortar and pestle) and grind to a smooth paste.
- > In a pan over a medium heat, lightly fry the

paste in the coconut oil until fragrant.

- > Add the water and simmer to infuse the flavours and to reduce the water until a smooth paste is left.

Chef's tips:

- > Store in an air-tight container in the fridge covered with a thin layer of oil to keep fresh for up to 1 week.
- > Bumbu Bali will keep in the freezer for up to 6 months.

LA MANGGIS

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- 5 DAYS / 4 NIGHTS
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Sounds too busy? Well there is time for relaxation, too! How about some reflexology under the stars, for those who wish? Bali Asli's Executive Chef Penelope Williams will take us on a memorable cooking class that is like no other. Another night we will partake in a luscious degustation dinner eaten by the light of tiny candles.



Carolyn Gray has joined the *Cravings* team and brings with her over 20 years of travel sales and marketing experience with her.

2012 Tour dates

- Friday 2nd March 2012
- Friday 1st June 2012
- Friday 28th Sept 2012

Note: The tour begins from this date; arrival in Bali is required prior.

There are many food tours available, but we wanted to bring you a tour that is out of the realm of normal and one that is memorable and 'better than fantastic!' With some activities that are unique only to this itinerary, our fully escorted tour to Bali is the first of our series – and a little gem it is! Other locations are to follow.

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The Alila Ubud has a stunning pool, as does Alila Manggis – you can swim to your heart's content or enjoy afternoon tea or a cocktail on one of their comfortable sun-beds. Spa facilities are available also at both resorts. Spa Alila is committed to providing unique treatments from the heart, blending ancient Asian healing techniques with age-old beauty recipes, featuring the curative benefits of fresh, natural, quality ingredients. The spa menus are extensive and use local products.

For more information email Carolyn at cravetours@vertu.net.au or visit www.cravingsmagazine.com.au and click on the itinerary.