



By Meliana Salim

Hujan Locale landed in Ubud like a welcome tropical rain: refreshing its farms and fields, nourishing our bodies with nature's bounty and capturing our hearts and souls with its found-and-foraged culinary movement.

Wood-roasted bone marrow with parsley lemon garlic capers andaliman bread crumbs with gentlemen's relish and brioche



Chef Will Meyrick certainly knows how to get our attention. When we got wind of his latest culinary venture, Hujan Locale (local rain) on Jalan Sri Wedari in Ubud—Bali's lush cultural highland blessed with a fair share of rainfall, our eyebrows were raised and our interest piqued.

The acclaimed Street Food Chef has been busy, to say the least. From publishing his own cookbook, "Sarong Inspirations" (now on its second print run), to starring in Indonesian TV programs (including the Top Chef franchise) and successfully establishing four restaurants—the award-winning flagship Sarong and its younger sister Mama San in Bali, the E&O (Eastern & Oriental) in Jakarta and the second Mama San in Hong Kong—nothing is stopping this multi-talented culinary icon from conquering Southeast Asia.

At the newly opened Hujan Locale, Chef Will has adopted an emerging food trend, the found-and-foraged philosophy, committing to a time-old tradition of slow-cooking using seasonable, sustainably sourced ingredients right down to the bar menu, paying a special tribute to the rain and the hedonistic harvest bestowed

upon him by local farmers with whom he has close relationships over the past three years.

We arrived at the aptly named restaurant semi-soaked from the prophesied rain showers but pleased to join our table of eight for an evening of gastronomic debauchery. We started with a round of inventive cocktails, such as the coconut mojito, cucumber martini, brem Negroni

(a local liqueur made of fermented glutinous rice mixed with gin and Campari) and carrot swizzel (a concoction of vodka, lemon, vanilla, chilli, Thai basil and homemade carrot soda served with a handful of wafer-thin carrot candy).

Hujan Locale has inherited the nostalgic feel of an old French-colonial mansion in rural Vietnam from the previous establishment, complete with beautiful



Sri Lankan cured scallop with mints shredded coconut lime juice and salmon roe





Kashmiri style roasted snapper wrapped in banana leaf with curry leaves, garam masala, tomato and green chilli served with mint yoghurt.



Bread and butter pudding with whiskey and maple syrup ice cream.

wooden shutters. The revamped lofty space reflects an understated tropical elegance with its recycled teak panelling and a palette of cool greens and greys boosted with splashes of pomegranate and citrus. The interior is given a cool edge with provincial-meets-urban touches of linear drawings, vintage botanical prints, a large distressed mirror with studded brass pins, an eye-catching M.C. Escher's "Palm" as a centrepiece and a commissioned photograph of "Morning Rain" by renowned Indonesian photographer Hengki Koentjoro, while still respectfully conserving its old-world Asian charm.

Chef Will's roots remain unapologetically grounded within the familiar perimeters of Southeast Asian flavours. The menu—put together with his "chef-in-crime" Palm

Amatawet, Chef Tim Bartholomew and Chef Stuart Marsden—offers a fusion fare of east meets west, combining his Scottish background and love of Asian cuisine and highlighting Indonesian cuisine with his trademark twist. Everything is made in-house wherever possible.

Adventurous appetizers include crispy chilli and fennel pig's ears with roasted chilli and garlic aioli, heritage black pudding served on a betel leaf with prawn, fern-tip and charred shredded coconut, wood-roasted bone marrow topped with breadcrumbs and gentlemen's relish and served with brioche and the crowd-favourite, Sri Lankan cured scallops with mints, shredded coconut, lime juice and salmon roe (think Asian ceviche exploding with spices).

Celebrating the diversity and complexity of Asia's distinctive cuisines, the mains are sourced from the earth and oceans. Try the melt-in-your-mouth slow-braised soy beef cheek with wasabi green pea risotto and snow pea shoots, the smoky wood-oven marinated grilled pork cutlet served with a watermelon pickled radish and ginger mirin vinaigrette, the twice-cooked cumin-basted lamb shoulder with quinoa salad, cucumber yoghurt and roasted potatoes and the flavour-packed Kashmiri style roasted snapper wrapped in banana leaf and served with mint yoghurt.

As there's always room for dessert, don't miss out on the best bread and butter pudding in town (with whiskey and maple syrup ice cream), or curious comforts such as orange and chocolate Oreo cheesecake, lemon and passion fruit curd tart with coconut Malibu ice cream and dark sticky bourbon and cola pudding with rum and raisin ice cream.

From the highly trained front of house team to the warm, knowledgeable wait staff, Hujan Locale's service is remarkably attentive yet discreet, never interfering with the flow of our conversations and allowing plenty of breathing (and tummy) space between courses—easily some of the best service we've experienced in Ubud.

Hujan Locale's dishes are delectable personal stories that take you on a scintillating journey across Asia's backstreet kitchens and into the heart of its culinary culture. Don't save it for a rainy day, it is an epicurean treat for all seasons!

([www.hujanlocale.com](http://www.hujanlocale.com))



## CHILI AND FENNEL CRISPY PIG'S EARS SERVED WITH ROASTED CHILI AND GARLIC AIOLI

### MAIN INGREDIENTS

100 grams pig's ears  
Dried pork skin  
Roasted chilli and garlic aioli  
Parsley, chopped as garnish  
Lemon cheek

**PIG'S EARS BRINE**  
1 kg salt  
5 liters water  
2 liters vinegar  
10 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 knob ginger approx 3 cm, peeled and crushed  
20 grams black peppercorn

**PIG'S EARS COOKING LIQUOR**  
2 liters chicken stock  
1 tablespoon peppercorns  
1 tablespoon salt  
1 carrot, big cut  
1 onion, big cut  
1 bulb garlic, big cut  
2 sprigs thyme

**PIG'S EARS CRUMB**  
Wheat flour  
Egg yolk  
Bread crumb

**DRIED PORK SKIN INGREDIENTS**  
Pork skin  
Spice mix  
Salt

**SPICE MIX**  
10 grams fennel  
10 grams coriander seeds  
1 teaspoon large chilli flakes  
1 small dried chilli  
5 black peppercorn

1 lime, zested  
Roasted chilli and garlic aioli  
7 large red chilli  
3 bulbs garlic  
100 ml olives oil  
100 ml salad oil  
5 egg yolks  
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
1 lemon, juiced

### METHOD

Soak the pig's ears in the brine for 4–5 hours. Braise the pig's ears for 2 hours in cooking liquor until soft. When soft, take out the pig's ears and hang in the chiller uncovered overnight to dry.

Cut the pig's ears into julienne strips and toss in the flour, then egg yolks, then breadcrumbs and then deep fry until crispy.

To make the dried pork skin, first wash the pork skin and place in the pot with enough

water to cover it. Bring to the boil and cook until soft. Take out and chill on flat trays then remove the excess fat. Dehydrate until dry. Heat some cooking oil, make sure it's really hot, and then fry the dried pork skin until crispy. Take out and place on the paper towel to dry the excess oil. Sprinkle with spice mix and salt.

To make the roasted chilli and garlic aioli, smoke large red chilli and garlic until cooked. Clean smoked chilli of seeds.

Squeeze out the garlic from skins. Blend both smoked chilli and garlic into a paste. Mix egg yolk, mustard, lemon juice and chilli garlic paste. Slowly add olive oil and salad oil, mix until thick. Season with salt last.

To assemble the dish, place the crispy pig's ears and crispy pork skin on the serving plate, sprinkle with chopped parsley. Served with roasted chilli and garlic aioli and a lime cheek on the side.