

ALL YOU CAN EAT

Justin Eeles takes to the streets of Jakarta for the flavours of Indonesia



The chef at work (above) on *nasi goreng* (fried rice)

In Jakarta, there is no shortage of variety when it comes to eating out. Apart from a wide selection of international restaurants there is also a tasty range of regional cooking from which to choose.

Jakarta has become a melting pot of people from all over the country. As Indonesia boasts more than 17,000 islands and a population of about 200 million, it is no wonder there is an impressive range of regional food available.

If you want to eat traditional Indonesian food there are three choices. First, there is the restaurant with a roof and a kitchen. Second, a restaurant with a canvas roof and a wok. And third, a wok on wheels without a roof.

A mix of bright colourants which are mixed with ice to make *es campur*

During the day the first category, known as *warang makan*, is the most popular.

Each *warung* specialises in food from a particular area or town. As Indonesians tend to socialize with people from their own town or region, these restaurants also serve as useful meeting places.

The second type of eating place appears on the streets around 5pm. Canvas or plastic roofs are erected over makeshift metal frames and tables, and benches arrive as if by magic. These mysterious restaurants seem to vanish just as quickly and are sometimes referred to as *warung kaget*, or surprise *warungs*. They specialise in most standard Indonesian dishes including seafood, fried rice, noodles, soup, satay and porridge.

The vendors usually set up near

each other so it is possible to order dishes from different places and have them brought to you.

The third category, the mobile cook, caters for take-aways. Nick-named *kaki lima*, or five feet, these vendors are recognized by the noises they make as they patrol the streets at night.

Each vendor has his own calling sign which corresponds to the dish he prepares.

The fried rice or noodle man taps the side of his mobile cart with a small stick. The meatball man hits a bowl with a spoon producing a bell-like sound. The satay man uses his voice and is recognized by a high-pitched cry of "saTE". The *putu* man, who sells sweet rice cakes, employs a steam whistle like a kettle which he silences using a small stick when he is approached.

All you have to do is wait for the vendor you want, wave him down and wait as it cooks. The meal usually takes less than 10 minutes and costs about 2000 rupiah.

Most *kaki lima* appear on the streets after the sun has gone down, usually around 7pm. G



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