

Make mine the spare ribs and a dry martini

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The river of hungry hordes that flood into Naughty Nuri's Warung in Ubud day and night don't come for the service. Nor do they come for the timber table d,cor and standard-issue restaurant crockery found in department store cafeterias the world over.

Also out is star-gazing for celebrities such as designer Donna Karan, actor Dolph Lundgren, Indonesian celebrity Vicky Burki or New York foodie and author of the hilarious *Kitchen Confidential*, Anthony Bodain, occasionally seated at the next table.

No, diners and drinkers at Naughty Nuri's demand far more than surface hype, coming in droves for what this smoky warung is famous for; pork spareribs that would have Fred Flintstone "yabba dabba do"-ing and a martini that has been called the best in Bali by some and the best in the world by others.

One sip of this knockout number and the mouth is alive with juniper berries, tang of lime and a mellowing in the bones. It's perhaps the flavor of the juniper berries that most amazes. When the berries hit the back palate the sensation is so full of zing that it is shockingly good.

As Cathay Pacific's *The Club* magazine writes, "Nuri is not only naughty, downright wicked for serving such lethal, but delicious beverages.

"You wouldn't look at it twice if you didn't know, but this wretched roadside shack with its chunky tables and infamously good steaks and ribs supplies the island's finest (martini) bar none.

"Huge, ice cold and strong as an ox, two of these and all be able to do is stagger over the road and collapse at the very conveniently situated Uma Ubud Hotel."

Owned and managed by Isnuri Suryatmi, with support from her husband, New Yorker Brian Aldinger, Brian says the secret to the martinis is the chilling of the Gordons Gin, kept on ice and shaken, not stirred before serving.

But whatever Naughty Nuri's is doing with the Gordons, this is a must-taste sensation, whether you are a martini drinker or not. But a word of warning: If you have never been into martini's know that from the first sip there is no going back. Yes, they are that good.

As to the pork spare ribs. They are simply legendary and with very good reason. Served direct from the grill and spilling over the plate in what can only be termed a Flintstones flashback, the mammoth-sized ribs are glossy with marinade; the meat slips from the bone as lightly as silk stockings as you devour your way through the sweetly succulent spare

ribs.

You can leave your cutlery etiquette at home when eating ribs at Nuri's -- dig in with your hands and swim in stripping the ribs bare -- it's less messy than you think and the only way to tackle these beauties.

Nuri says her ribs marinade recipe is deceptively simple; sweet soy sauce "only ABC brand," garlic, red onions and a dash of salt and pepper; from there, all in the cooking.

There are side dishes to be had, such as the homemade golden chips that are way too chunky to be named after their effeminate French fries counterparts, but like the chap nearby who ordered "just the ribs thanks," the ribs are a meal in themselves. So unless you could eat a horse and chase its rider, follow that *aficionados dictum* and order side dishes as needed.

Other mains on the menu are highly recommended port or beef sausages. These little beauties will answer the needs of the carnivorous, as will the inch-thick pork chops that are the size of a dinner plate. The hamburgers are another Nuri's sensation. You'll need a knife and fork, they are far too big to get you laughing gear around in one go -- real hamburgers.

Naughty Nuri's has been an Ubud icon for the past decade, opening up opposite Museum Neka in Jl. Sanggingan in November, 1995.

Nuri credits her friend, Ibu Gadis Arivia Pollack, a University of Indonesia lecturer, for giving the couple the drive to open the *warung*.

"When we found this place it was just three garages. Gadis said rent it and open up a warung. Back then the kitchen had a two-burner stove and an esky. We opened the warung with two bottles of Fanta, two of Coke, two of Sprite and three large and three small bottles of beer. Our worst day was on Feb. 2, 1996, when we sold just two bottles of Sprite. I remember that day very very well," said Nuri of the birth of a legend.

Word about Nuri's Indonesian cooking and the ice-cold beer quickly spread, with a local gay crowd finding the warung and becoming stalwarts who are still regulars. They are also credited with the warung's move to martinis on the drinks menu.

"One of the guys asked if we could make a gin and tonic; I said we could but we didn't have gin or tonic, but I could get some. That was how our martinis came about and people still come here to get a drink'," said Brian adding it was the gay crowd that supported the warung through "the tough early years when Nuri served Indonesian food only."

Brian says it was a fluke that the warung added the now-famous barbecued spare ribs to its menu.

"I had been in the Peace Corps in Africa and some friends from the corps turned up one night and said we needed a barbecue. John Allister put down US\$250 on the table saying, "build a barbecue -- everyone loves a barbecue".

I said we'd think about it, but pay for the barbecue ourselves. John put the money in Nuri's hands; she simply said thank you and the rest is history," said Brian of the warung which now sells around 500 kilograms of ribs a week.

Plans for expansion are definitely not on the horizon, says Nuri and Brian, despite urgings from many to open a Naughty Nuri's in New York's east side, Bandung and Jakarta.

"People come here not only for the ribs and the martinis, they come to have a chat and catch up with what's going on. If we opened up in other places we could not be there, so that aspect of it would be lost. We've been told not to change a thing here and I think that's right. People come back year after year for the place to be just as it is. It's like coming home," said Brian, calling out "hi" to another regular dropping in for a pre-dinner martini and goings-on gossip while the grill works its magic on the ribs.

(Meals at Naughty Nuri's Warung start at Rp. 25,000 for barbecued sausages and Rp. 45,000 for the ribs. A very fine imported Australian fillet mignon can be had for Rp.135,000 and a martini is Rp 45,000 The ice-cold beer draught Bintang is just Rp 12,000, soft drinks Rp 5,000 and juices are Rp 6,000.)