Main dishes / Indonesia

Tempeh Rendang

Indonesian vegan rendang where slabs of fermented soybean tempeh are slowly simmered in an aromatic coconut milk paste with galangal, lemongrass, and kaffir lime until the coconut cooks dry and the tempeh is encrusted in a dark, burnished spice coating.

Time 150 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- [ ] 600 g Tempeh, cut into 3 cm cubes
- [ ] 800 g Full-fat coconut milk
- [ ] 40 g Lemongrass stalks, bruised
- [ ] 30 g Galangal (fresh or frozen), sliced
- [ ] 8 whole Kaffir lime leaves
- [ ] 1 whole Turmeric leaf (optional)
- [ ] 25 g Dried red chilies, soaked and drained
- [ ] 100 g Shallots, peeled
- [ ] 30 g Garlic cloves
- [ ] 20 g Fresh ginger
- [ ] 8 g Ground coriander
- [ ] 4 g Ground cumin
- [ ] 10 g Fine sea salt
- [ ] 20 g Palm sugar (gula jawa)
- [ ] 30 g Coconut oil or neutral oil
- [ ] 20 g Fried shallots

Let's make it.

01 Blend the soaked dried chilies, shallots, garlic, ginger, coriander, and cumin into a smooth paste in a food processor or blender. Add a tablespoon of water if needed to get it moving. The paste should be fine-textured, deep brick-red, and smell intensely of raw shallot and warm spice.

02 Heat coconut oil in a large wok or heavy pot over medium heat. Add the paste and fry, stirring constantly, for 8–12 minutes. The paste will first thin out as moisture evaporates, then darken and deepen in color, and finally begin to separate from the oil — a thin ring of clear oil appears around the paste. This is keluarkan minyak — the oil breaking out. This step develops the foundational flavor.

03 Add tempeh to the fried paste and stir to coat. Pour in coconut milk, add the lemongrass, galangal, kaffir lime leaves, turmeric leaf if using, salt, and palm sugar. Stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a medium simmer. Cook uncovered, stirring every 10 minutes to prevent sticking.

04 Continue simmering uncovered for 1–1.5 hours, stirring every 10 minutes with increasing frequency as the liquid reduces. The coconut milk will pass through several stages: creamy white, then pale yellow, then the coconut fat will separate and the paste will begin to fry in its own oil. This final stage — when the rendang is almost dry and the tempeh is frying in coconut oil — develops the characteristic dark, burnished crust. Keep stirring to prevent scorching. The rendang is done when the tempeh is dark and encrusted and the 'sauce' is more of a thick, dark coating.

05 Transfer to a serving plate or shallow bowl. Scatter fried shallots over the top. Serve with steamed rice, sambal, and pickled cucumber. Rendang improves overnight — the flavors deepen and the spice coating firms.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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