

Indonesian's Traditional Food - Tumpeng

Tumpeng may sound unfamiliar to you, but you may know about a birthday party well. Most of the rest of the world may prefer to use a cake to celebrate their birthday parties. At the party, you may invite your family, friend, and clique. Then, you will cut out the cake and give it to some people. Why should it be a cake? In western countries, the staple foods are corn, root, and wheat milled into a flour. However, in eastern countries, especially Indonesia, we love rice. Moreover, we celebrate our gifts by presenting Tumpeng. We present Tumpeng in every single celebration such as an opening house, Independence Day, Indonesia's thanksgiving, religious movement, and also a birthday party. So, what is Tumpeng?

Tumpeng is from Javanese terminology in Indonesia called “Tumapaking Laku Kang Lempeng Tumuju Ing Pangeran”. It means that your actions should be following the right ways, and God blesses you. Javanese believe that there are consequences for your actions. Good actions will be paid good results, and bad actions will be paid bad results. God will help you to be succeeded if you give your 100% or 110% of your effort. The main body of Tumpeng is portrayed as a mountain and biodiversity. Moreover, Indonesians live in the ring of fire, so they live with and from many volcanoes in Indonesia. In ancient times, the mountain was considered a holy place where the gods and ancestral spirits dwelled. Tumpeng which is manifested as a noble hope has a cone shape that represents the relationship between God and humans called “Manunggaling Kawulo Gusti”. Tumpeng is identical to the yellow color of this rice in Indonesian tradition which symbolizes gold, which means wealth. With the existence of yellow rice in celebration, it is expected to bring a lot of blessings of wealth and prosperity of life because of abundant wealth. The cone rice is laid out on a top with banana leaves. The form that soars to the top also symbolizes the hope that the level of human life will be increasingly prosperous. Why does rice turn into yellow? The yellow color comes from turmeric, and it is also known as a medical herb. Moreover, it also has a very strong antioxidant. Combining with rice, it contains carbohydrate and glucose which need to be consumed to create energy.

Tumpeng offerings along with various side dishes are usually used as offerings or sesaji/sajen for ancestral deities or spirits. However, gradually the meaning of Tumpeng has shifted to a hope so that they can always live in prosperity and blessing. Around the Tumpeng, there were seven kinds of side dishes which is number seven or “pitu” in Javanese which means pitulungan or help from God as a blessing. Seven helps illustrate into chicken, boiled egg, anchovy, flower-shaped tomato, Urab, Tempe, and red flower-shaped chili.

First, the chicken that is commonly used is a rooster. The choice of a rooster symbolizes an avoidance of being arrogant, or always interrupting when the other person is talking, and always feels right himself. Chicken contains protein that is useful for the body. If in one piece of chicken thigh weighing about 85 grams, it contains 21 grams of protein. While chicken breast contains higher protein which is 25 grams. the recommended daily intake of protein for women is 46 grams and for men is 56 grams. Thus, protein is important for the body as a function of the body's immunity, cell growth, and also muscle mass.

Second, the boiled egg symbolizes that humans are created with the same nature. It is served without cracking the shell. The philosophy behind the way it is served is that every action of humans must be planned and executed well to get the perfect results. Eggs not only contain protein but also contain almost all nutrients such as calories, fat, carbohydrates, calcium,

vitamins A, B, and C. By boiling the eggs, there is no extra fat in the cooking process so it is healthier.

Third, anchovy can also be served in Tumpeng rice. Anchovy symbolizes togetherness and harmony because anchovies often live in groups in the sea. Fish is one source of fatty acids, especially omega-3 fatty acids which are important for the health and development of the heart and brain function, especially for the development of babies' brains in their intelligence. However, you need to limit the consumption because it contains high salt and can be at risk of health problems such as bone loss.

Fourth, Tumpeng also contains flower-shaped tomatoes. If you often notice that tomatoes are green then the inside is also green, if the outside is yellow then the inside is also yellow and if the outside is red then the inside is also red. Therefore, it is very important to be yourself. Moreover, the red color is usually synonymous with courage. You can imagine tomato stems that are not too hard or soft but still bear fruit even though it will eventually collapse if there is no support. This shows the courage to produce something useful even though eventually it must fall but must keep fighting.

Fifth, Urab is made from some vegetables such as kale, spinach, long beans, sprouts and onions and then seasoned with coconut chili sauce. Each vegetable symbolizes a certain idea about life. The name "Kale" is derived from Javanese "Jenangkung" which means to protect. Spinach can be interpreted as a secure and comfortable feeling. Sprout means growth and long bean means vision. Meanwhile, onion symbolizes human cognition of considering everything carefully and properly before taking action. The last is the sauce which is derived from Javanese "urip" meaning life. People interpret it as humans' capacity to give life to their family. Moreover, the vegetables contained in Urab are resources of water, vitamin, and mineral that guarantee people to stay healthy. Some vegetables can be served immediately without being cooked and others need to be boiled or steamed first to increase nutrient and add flavor.

Sixth, Tempe Orek or dried Tempe, symbolizes the simplicity and humility of humans to respect others as God's creation which are equal under God. Tempe is one of the inexpensive food that can be afforded by everyone in Indonesia. Tempe contains not only various vegetable protein but also calcium which is equal to cow's milk. It is the best source of vitamin B12, antioxidant, and very recommended for infants or people on diet.

Seventh, there is red flower-shaped chili which is usually put at the peak of Tumpeng. It symbolizes the lighting fire that can guide humans' life based on Indonesian culture, belief, and moral values. Chili is the source of vitamins that are seven times more than what is contained in an orange. The majority of Indonesian like spicy food. If a dish does not use chili, it feels less enjoyable.

Could you imagine if a birthday is celebrated without a delicious cake with a certain number of the birthday candles put at the peak of it? What should be shared with other people? Gratitude? Happiness? Exactly, people would like to share their gratitude and happiness on special occasions of their life. Their gratitude and happiness universally take form in foods and drinks. So, sharing foods means sharing gratitude and happiness. Murdjati Garjito, the Culinary History of the Archipelago, "ngepung Tumpeng" which means to enjoy these foods to be eaten with

many people. Indonesians prefer Tumpeng over the cake because of their culture and the richness of life philosophy contained in Tumpeng. It is so tasty and typically Indonesia. Meanwhile, the ingredients are assumed to meet the healthy standard: carbohydrate in rice, vitamin, and protein from seven side dishes. Deserving Tumpeng is better rather than fast food because it is healthier. By serving on many special occasions, Indonesians are trying to preserve one of the cultural heritages from their ancestors. Tumpeng connects you, family, friends, and God.

In the era of COVID-19, you probably could not invite many people as usual in your birthday party. But, you still could celebrate with your mom and dad at home. by using Tumpeng, we hope God bless us. Stay save Stay at home. Bye.

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