

## 1. **Ungriyi** (Layered eggplant with meat and tomato)

2 medium size eggplants, with few seeds (taste raw to ensure not bitter)  
1 lbs. lean, high quality stew meat, cut into small cubes, roughly ½ inch across  
2 medium size onions, 1 slightly smaller than the other  
2 medium size tomatoes or 1 large tomato, very ripe  
1 ¼ teaspoons tomato paste  
Juice from ½ lemon  
¼ cup dry red wine (or sweet red wine, if no silan)  
1 tablespoon silan (date honey)  
Several teaspoons salt  
½ teaspoon pepper  
¼ - ½ teaspoon cayenne  
3 tablespoons oil  
Optional: ½ teaspoon tamarind paste

Peel eggplants and slice them lengthwise to a thickness of roughly ¼ - ½ inch. Mix the eggplant slices in a bowl with 2 teaspoons salt. Allow to stand for at least ½ hour, so that the liquid in the eggplant slices is drawn out by the salt. While the eggplants sit:

Chop the larger onion fairly finely and set aside. Put oil and meat into a sauce pan and sauté on medium flame until meat begins to brown. Add diced onion, pepper, and cayenne and sauté until the onions are golden. Add 1 cup of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low.

While meat is cooking, take eggplant slices, 3 or 4 at a time, and squeeze them over a sink, so that the excess liquid comes out. If needed, squeeze the slices between paper towels in order to draw out the liquid. Repeat until all the eggplant slices have been squeezed. Put ¼ cup of oil in a frying pan and set on medium flame. When the oil is very hot, place as many eggplant slices into the pan as will fit (do not stack the slices). Fry the eggplant slices until they are dark brown. Remove to a paper towel lined dish. Repeat until all the eggplant slices are fried. Set aside.

Cook the meat until it is tender. Reduce liquid until there is little left. Cut the smaller onion in half and then thinly slice each half, so that the outcome is semi-circular onion strips. Add the onion rounds to the sauce pan, raise flame to medium, and stir continuously for approximately 5 minutes, until the onion strips are golden. Peel the tomatoes, and finely cut ½ the quantity of tomato into small pieces (set the remainder aside). Add the tomato pieces to the sauce pan and sauté until they are soft. Lower flame to low. Distribute the meat mixture so that it forms an even layer across the bottom of the sauce pan and cover the mixture with ½ of the eggplant slices, laying the eggplant slices in the same direction. Slice the remaining tomato thinly and place on top of the eggplant, to create a layer of tomato. Cover the tomato layer with the remaining eggplant, laying these eggplant slices in a direction perpendicular to the eggplant slices in the layer below. Mix 1 teaspoon tomato paste with ½ cup water, lemon juice, red wine,

and silan (and tamarind, if you are using it). Add a dash of salt over the eggplants in the sauce pan, then pour the tomato paste liquid over the top of the eggplants, taking care to pour gradually enough so that the liquid goes all over the eggplant. Cover the saucepan, lower flame to low, and let cook for about 15 minutes. Taste sauce and adjust flavors (if not tangy enough, add more lemon; if too tangy, add a little bit more salt).

Remove the contents of the saucepan onto a serving dish by sliding the *ungriyi*, in one section and without disturbing the integrity of the whole, onto a serving dish. You may use spatula to assist the movement, but do not attempt to lift the *ungriyi* with a spatula, as this will cause the structure to fall apart. Take care to maintain the integrity and appearance of the layered dish. Serve with white rice with *hkaka*.