

Values and brief explanation of Belachan

The making of blocks from minute shrimps-“Belachan.”

Belachan is one of the very important seasonings of Malaysian cooking. The tiny shrimps are fermented with salt and are then pressed into firm ‘cakes.’

In addition to adding a subtle flavour and strong, distinctive aroma to baits which fish find incredibly attractive, Belachan also contains a reasonable level of protein of which a high percentage is nutritionally available.

The production process

Large quantity of minute shrimps are drained of water- then mixed with salt to be retained inside a large wooden tumbler. The salt and decaying shrimps will eventually be fused into a semi-solid, dense dough-like material.

In ensuring complete homogenizing, the newly formed dough is passed through a mill, firmly compressed and then pushed out as a long, sausage of paste. This process also increases the surface area of the paste and starts the natural drying process by open-air dehydration. (Air drying as we know it!)

Remarkably, the entire process is then reversed as the dough is repacked into sacks as is left to carry on fermenting.

The dough is given one final milling and the Belachan is then given an extended period of drying to reach the desired dry matter. As drying is done by the suns rays, the length of this process depends on the weather during the production period.

Whilst most batches appear uniform in tone, there can be different shades of colour. This is due to a variety of species of shrimps used to prepare the Belachan.

The finished products are dried, then retrieved and stored into containers. The moment the semi-dried dough is taken away from heat, it will absorb moisture and return to the dough stage, and hence packaging and storage of packed products is vital in retaining its freshness and aromatic quality.

In a dough stage, the finished goods are then shaped into cakes and divided into "rectangular" cubes or blocks of 250g for final distribution and sales to the human food (and fish bait!!) market.

Nutritional Information

Amount per 100g.

Energy: 350 k.j.

Protein: 29.6g.

Fat: - Total 2.4g.

- Saturated 0.3g.

Carbohydrates: 2.53g.

Sugars: 0g.

Sodium: 16%

Ingredients: Shrimp-70% Palm Oil-3% Salt-22% Others-5%