

Indonesian chef with flair for painting

Restaurant chefs have a reputation for being colourful characters but Wilhelm Rappold at New Plymouth's Black Olive brings another dimension to the legend.

Not only does he turn out the characteristically spicy Indonesian dishes served there but he is also responsible for the art works hanging on the walls.

Willy, as he is known to staff and regulars, noticed the absence of pictures when he joined the restaurant about a year ago and decided to fill the gaps with paintings of his homeland — he painted them all.

The result ranges from a portrait of an actress niece to traditional Indonesian scenes.

He is originally from Bandung in West Java but has spent much of his 52 years on the move, including two periods in New Zealand and one in Holland

and one in Papua New Guinea where he got his training in restaurant cooking more than six years ago.

He has tried his hand at train driving, photography, teaching and machine operating but says his ambition now is to open his own art gallery.

Willy prepares dishes according to his own recipes, using variations of 10 to 12 herbs, most of which are imported. He says he can get most things he wants and where there are difficulties can usually find an alternative.

Special factors in the success of Indonesian cooking are the recipe and the timing of the cooking.

Too much or too little and the full flavour is lost.

For stir-fried dishes he uses a range of up to six well-oiled woks. The restaurant has a sate oven for its sate dishes.

Willy shares the Black Olive kitchen with Bert Moot, one of the restaurant's four owners and its steak specialist for a menu which also offers Western dishes.

Costs

The restaurant is operated by Mr Moot, his wife Johanna and son Michael and Andrea Street.

They took over about a year ago with the commendable aim of operating the place at a profit but

keeping prices as low as possible. The menu confirms their efforts.

The most expensive main course is carpetbag steak at \$9.50.

The Moots place no special emphasis on either Western or Indonesian dishes and say customers are usually evenly divided about which they will try.

I asked about the restaurant name which appeared to have little in common with Indonesia or New Zealand. They explained they inherited the name when they bought the business and although they thought about a change somehow never got around to it.

Our party of three took for granted their assurances that Bert cooks the best steaks in town and tried some of Willy's Indonesian fare.

We confessed to some ignorance to things Indonesian and — Andrea Street who acted as a friendly waitress, suggested we try the Nasi Rames — rice served with a selection of main dishes.

Selection

Willy sent us out a wide selection of very tasty and in some cases very hot dishes, several of which we did not get to the bottom of.

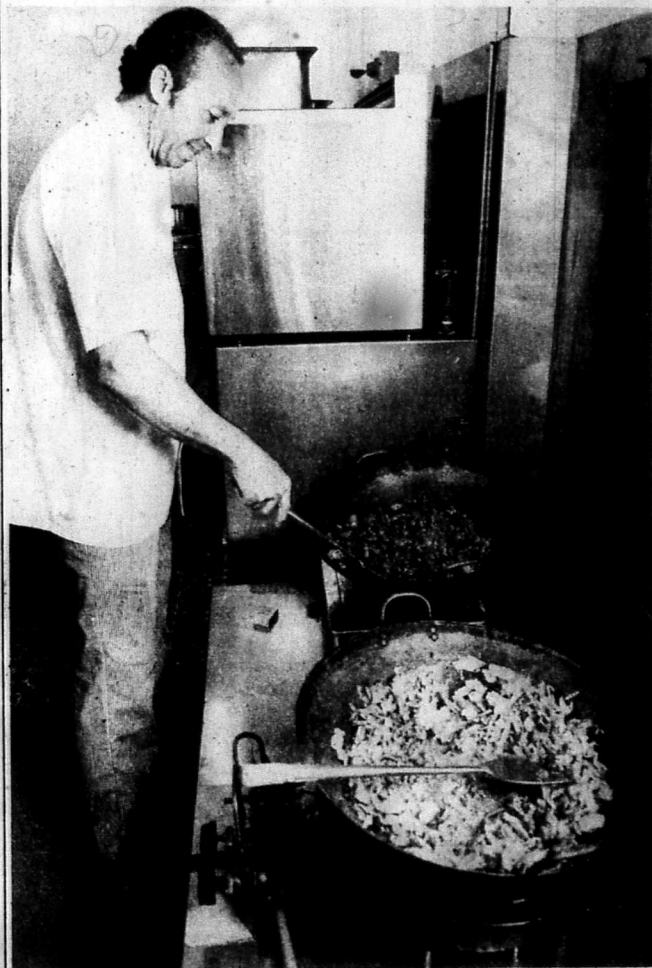
Besides the rice, we got Keri kambing (a juice-extracting curry), Smoor sapi (a milder dish of beef marinated in spices and toya sauce), Rendang sapi (hot again — this time beef curry in coconut sauce), Ayam panggang (roast chicken in spicy sauce), Ikan bumbu bali (fish in chili sauce), Cap coy (stir-fried vegetables, pork, prawns, crab) and Keri undang jawa (curried prawns).

All this with Krupuk (shrimp puffs), and much more than we could eat, cost \$9.50 each.

We are still deciding which we liked the best, but have to agree the fish, which is one of Willy's favourites, was very nice — but then so were the beef and the lamb and the prawns and...

We didn't try Willy's other favourite Sambal goreng daging (fried chilled beef strips) but maybe next time. We have all agreed to go back.

The total cost of the food for three was \$42 and with a \$9 bottle of Mission white burgundy, a pre-dinner drink each, coffee at 80c a cup and a liqueur each, the total bill was \$61.



Willy Rappold at work with two of his well-used woks. The dish in the foreground is Cap — Coy while he is stirring Smoor sapi.