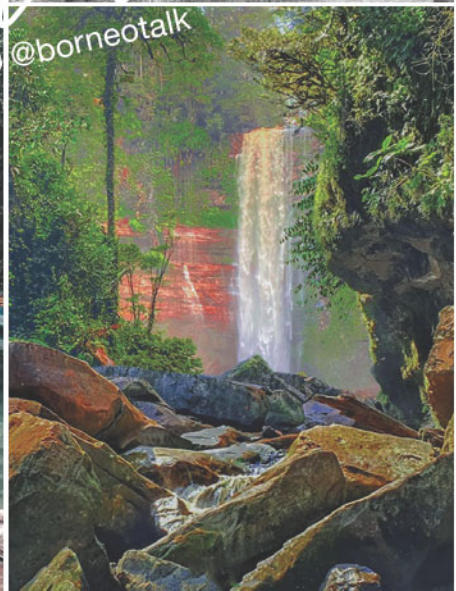
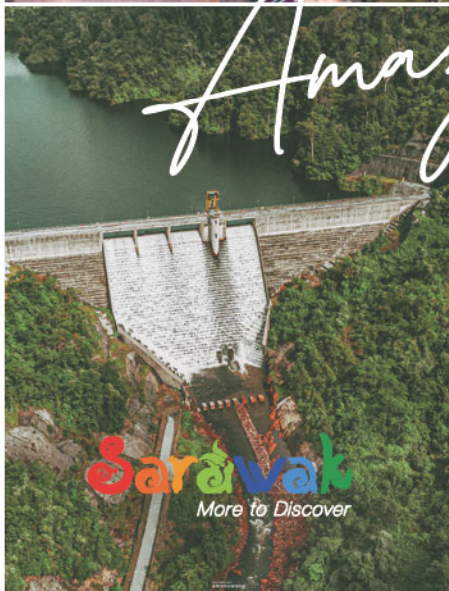
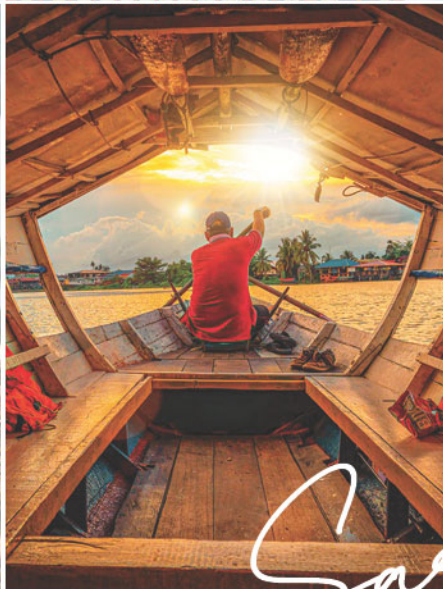
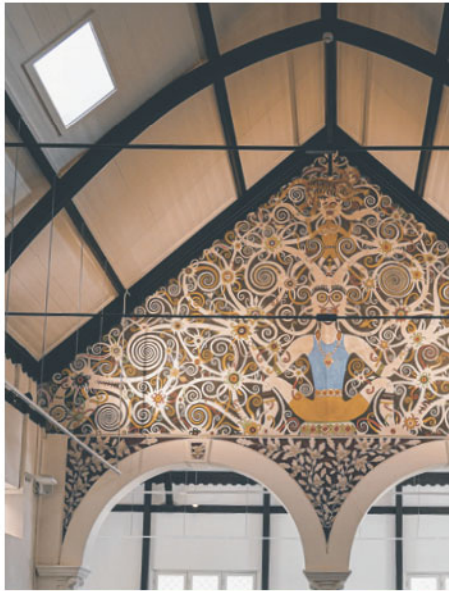


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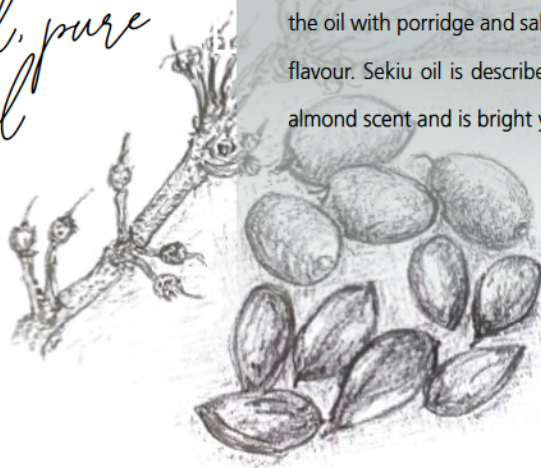
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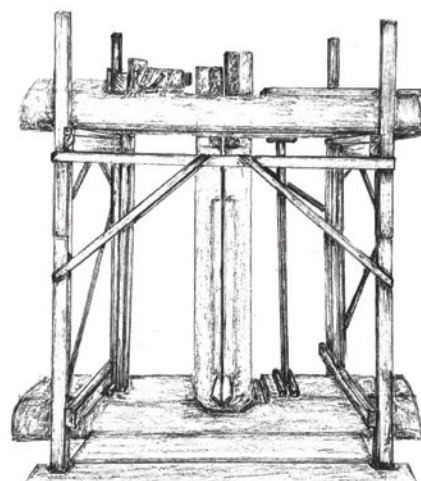


THE STORY OF SEKIU

*a golden oil, pure
and natural*

Sekiu oil is extracted from the seed kernel of Sekiu fruit (*Madhuca motleyana* from the Sapotaceae family), also known as Skiu or Ketiau. This tree is commonly found in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. One of the best sites to see Sekiu trees in Sarawak is Kampung Jemoreng in Matu District, Mukah which is easily accessible via road and only three-hour drive from Mukah town. The Melanau community of Kampung Jemoreng, still use traditional methods inherited from their ancestors to extract Sekiu oil which they use to flavour their food – they would combine one teaspoon of Sekiu oil with three spoons of sago pearls and a pinch of salt or mix the oil with porridge and salted fish for a more in-depth flavour. Sekiu oil is described as having a strong bitter almond scent and is bright yellow in colour.





A contraption called 'Ales' is used in the making of Sekiu oil

Keeping with Tradition: The making of the Sekiu oil

According to Penghulu Haji Che Jeni bin Shahdan, fruiting season of Sekiu happens once in every four to five years, occurring from January to March. Seeds are collected from the surface of the water using rattan basket. Traditionally, the locals produced Sekiu oil with few essential steps.

"The locals dry the seeds for at least eight hours per day under direct sunlight. The drying process usually takes about three days, after which the villagers would shake the seed to listen for any sound coming from them. It is a clever way to tell if the seeds are completely dried. The sound also means that the kernel has been separated from the seed shell. To remove the seed shell from the kernel, the dried seeds were put into a sack, pound and then sifted. The kernels are then pounded into fine powder prior to use in the following step", Che Iman bin Shahdan shared, he is among one of the participating communities in the Sekiu project.

He added that the dried kernels are pounded into powdery form and cooked traditionally; a method known as 'Pais'. The kernel powder and "Lalang Tebu" leaves are layered onto a type of tree bark called "Kayu Is". The layered tree bark is then rolled and placed over open stove. "Lalang Tebu" leaves is used to check the presence of the oil.

He also explained that oil of Sekiu is extracted using special tools known as "Kepisen" and "Ales". A clean cloth, which acts a filter, is placed inside the "Kepisen" and then filled with the cooked powder. The "Kepisen" is then placed in the "Ales" which is used to squeeze or press the oil out of the kernel powder. What's interesting is that about three kilogrammes of cooked Sekiu powder can produce about one litre of Sekiu oil.

"The powder from the first pressing, known as 'Umas', can still be re-clamped and pressed (a process called 'Ales Umas') to extract more Sekiu oil, which is mostly preferred by consumers because it is less bitter", said Nurshila binti Kari, one of the ladies participating in the project.



Nora'ejah binti Mohd Hamzah collects the Sekiu seeds which floats along Batang Jemoreng river.

Sekiu as Flavour and Food

Sekiu oil is traditionally used by the locals as food flavouring. The bitterness in the oil and its almond scent are due to the presence of benzaldehyde, an aromatic aldehyde which is widely used in the flavouring and perfume-making industries.

Besides adding a touch of unique taste to your cooking, Sekiu oil is also good for you as it contains 60 percent oleic acid, which is also known as monounsaturated omega-9 fatty acid. Among the edible oils, olive oil has the highest content of oleic acid (55% - 85% of its total fatty acids) while other edible oils such as soybean oil, palm oil and corn oil contain about 10% - 40% of oleic acid (Sin-Geon Choi *et. al.*, 2010). This shows that Sekiu oil can be considered a healthier sources of fat similar to olive oil. Studies report that oleic acid protects against heart disease by reducing cholesterol and inflammation.

Other very interesting uses of Sekiu oil

Sekiu is not only used as cooking oil or food flavouring. The oil also used in the making of soap and candles. Back in year 1920, gutta percha from Sekiu tree or "getah ketiau" are traded and it is much more valuable than "jelutong" (*Dyera spp.*) (Madhuca (PROSEA Exudates), 2016).

Sekiu Oil Project – An Initiative towards Socio-Economic Recovery of Sarawak's Local Community

Sarawak Biodiversity Centre (SBC) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malaysia aims to improve the livelihood of the community in Kampung Jemoreng, through this project that enhances their knowledge and skills via virtual learning and



Sekiu flower, fruit and seed.

capacity building. It is intended to support the growth of community-based businesses through digital platform and harnessing the power of e-commerce in addressing COVID-19 socio-economic related challenges. The project is also supported by partner agencies namely Ministry of International Trade & Industry, Industrial Terminal & Entrepreneur Development (MINTRED) and Sarawak Digital Economy Corporation (SDEC). The project will also provide a platform for partnership between these community-based businesses with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). So far, the response from the Kampung Jemoreng community has been amazing, with 45 homes in the village taking part in the project.

Kampung Jemoreng is home to approximately 3,000 Sekiu trees. It is a good start for the participants as the success of the project will undoubtedly help improve their livelihood, while contributing to the local economy and promoting local Sarawak products to the larger markets. In spite of the challenges with the pandemic, SBC continues to work together with the community to attain the project's objective and subsequently enrich their lives with breakthrough innovation in biodiversity.



Penghulu Haji Che Jeni bin Shahdan (right) pictured together with Junaidi bin Rakawi, Nurshila binti Kari and Rosetina Lahai Lok are proud of their culture and aim to preserve the tradition of making Sekiu oil and to introduce the oil to the world.



This project is funded by the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre (SBC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malaysia in partnership with the Ministry of International Trade & Industry, Industrial Terminal & Entrepreneur Development (MINTRED), Sarawak and Sarawak Digital Economy Corporation (SDEC).

