

Persian Rice



- Rind of 2 oranges
- 7-cups cold tap water
- 1/4-cup sugar
- 1t. white vinegar or lime juice
- 1T. rose water
- 1T safflower oil
 - 3-cups Basmati rice
 - 6-8 quarts warm tap water
 - 2 quarts cold tap water
 - Later add:
 - 3-4-T. safflower oil
 - 1/ 8 t. turmeric
 - 1/8 t. saffron
 - 1/4-t. ground cardamom
- 1 medium onion
- 2-T. safflower oil
- 1-T. butter
- 1/2-t. turmeric
- 1/16 t. saffron
 - 1/4-cup dried currants or tiny raisins
 - 1/4-cup zereshk (or other dried berries)
 - 1 heaping T. sugar
 - 1/16-t. saffron
 - 1T. butter
- 1/4 cups raw slivered almonds
- 1-t. safflower oil
- 1/8-t. saffron

Cut away a thin layer of rind from 2 oranges and cut into 1/8" slivers. To remove any bitter taste from the rind, boil in a 1-quart saucepan at a simmer for 5 minutes in 2 cups of water plus 1t. white vinegar, which preserves the color. After 5 minutes, drain the water, add 2 cups fresh water and boil for another 5 minutes. Use no vinegar after the first time. Drain water again and repeat by adding 1/4-cup sugar, 1-T. rose water and a single cup of fresh water. Boil gently at a simmer so the sugar does not burn and until most of the water evaporates forming syrup that candies the rinds. Remove from heat and mix in 1T. safflower oil.

Begin preparation of the rice according to steps 1 & 2 in the Rice Tricks text boxes. When Rice Trick 1 & 2 are complete leave the rice in the strainer to drain well, wash and dry the stockpot and return it to the stove.

Soak the dried currants and zereshk (or other dried berries) in water for 10-20 minutes. Cut the onion in half. Peel it and discard the ends. Slice the remaining onion as thinly as possible. Measure out the almonds.

In a skillet, sauté in separate batches the onion, the almonds and then dried fruit in the given order. Add a pinch of saffron to each batch as described in the Infusion text box below. Additionally add other ingredients as indicated in the grouped ingredient list. Set aside each batch of sautéed ingredients, but do not wash the skillet in between batches. Be sure to sauté the onions until golden brown first, the almond slivers second and the soaked berries last. Be quite careful not to burn the sugar in the final batch. Reserve the 3 separate batches.

For coloration, add 1/8 t. saffron to a small bowl to 1/8-cup hot water. Stir so the saffron dissolves. Then add 1 ladle full of cooked white rice to it. The liquid will absorb and color this rice an intense yellow. Reserve the yellow rice.

Reheat the stockpot and add enough oil to cover the bottom of the pot thoroughly. Add the turmeric and saffron to the hot oil. Gently put 1/2 of the white rice from the strainer on top of the hot oil and sprinkle 1/4-t. cardamom on top and 1/4 of the candied orange rinds. Add 1/2 of each of the reserved onions, almonds, and dried fruit. Add the other half of the cooked white rice on top and then the remaining onions, fruit and almonds. Sprinkle 1/2-cup of cold water evenly on top. As described in step 3 of the Rice Tricks text box, coax the rice into a tall cone shape, cover with the dishcloth-covered lid and cook as described on medium-low heat until the pot steams profusely.

When cooked, but still a bit firm, spill all the rice that falls freely from the stockpot into a serving dish. Preserve the fluffy texture by being careful not to smash the rice or scrape any from the pot. Instead return the stockpot with the rice that is stuck to the pot and cook for approximately 5 minutes on a medium-high heat so it becomes crispy, but not burnt.

In the meantime, drain any remaining liquid from the reserved yellow rice and gently toss these contrasting grains into the main serving dish. Arrange the rest of the candied orange rinds decoratively on top. Finally, arrange fresh orange slices around the edge before serving.

When the rice remaining in the stockpot is crispy, submerge the bottom of the stockpot into the sink that you have already filled with a couple of inches of standing cold water. The hot pot will make the water spatter as you submerge it into the cold water, so use oven mitts and hold the pot at arm's length. Be careful! This is a clever way of separating the crispy parts from the pot in large sheets, which presents far better than broken bits. Serve the sheets of crisp rice in a separate dish.

Infusing Dry Spices

Many Asian cuisines use this specific technique to infuse the flavor of dry spices because it intensifies the flavor: Add the dry spices to hot oil and cook for a moment before adding the main ingredients. It takes a little practice to learn not to scorch the spices. If it does burn, start over on a lower heat.

Three Rice Tricks

*Once you make rice this way, you'll never go back to just boiling it!
Ultimately this prevents clumping and insures fluffy individual grains.*

1. It's important to handle the rice gently as you agitate, rinse and move it from one container to another, so that the rice grains to not become bruised.

2. Begin by washing rice in a stockpot in 2 quarts lukewarm water, which is placed in the sink. Gently agitate the rice with your hand, and empty the water when it becomes milky. Repeat the process 3-4 times until most of the starch is washed away and the water remains somewhat clear. Then add 2 1/2 quarts of cold water to 3-cups rice with 1/2-cup salt and bring the rice to a boil. When the pot boils, cook the rice only 3 minutes more before draining it in a large mesh strainer. Sprinkle the rice gently, but thoroughly for 1-2 minutes with cold tap water to stop the cooking and remove the excess salt.

3. Wrap the pot's lid with a clean dishcloth, tying the corners on the lid's top handle. After sprinkling 1/2 cup of water on the rice and forming the rice into a cone shape, place the dishcloth-covered lid on, and cook the rice on a medium-low heat until the pot steams profusely. At this point, taste the rice for doneness. Cook a little more with the lid on if necessary. The dishcloth cleverly absorbs the condensation from the steam so it does not drip down and make the rice soggy.