

TASTE THE WORLD ~ RECIPE

Prepared by: **Tara Tiba** IRAN/CUBA

PERSIAN SAFFRON CHICKEN & RICE WITH CUBAN FRIED PLANTAIN, BLACK BEANS & SALAD SHIRAZI

Surprisingly, Iran and Cuba have many cultural aspects in common. Music, food and warmth, for example, but one thing is for sure; no one can live without rice!

Persian Saffron Rice ~ Ingredients

- 3 lt water
- 3 tablespoons salt
- 2 cups basmati rice, rinsed
- salt to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive/vegetable oil
- 1 russet potato, cut into ¼-inch slices (or alternatively flat bread)
- 1 pinch saffron threads
- 1 ½ tablespoons hot water

Method

Bring water and salt to a boil in a pot. Add rice and cook, stirring, for around 7 minutes. Drain.

Heat oil in a pot over medium-high heat. Cover bottom of pot with one layer of potato slices (or flat bread or just rice to make the crispy part called Tahdig). Sprinkle salt over potatoes. Cook until potatoes are sizzling, 2 minutes; top potatoes with rice. Reduce heat to low.

Top the pot with a layer of clean paper towels and place lid over towels. Steam until rice is fluffy, for about 45 minutes.

Grind saffron threads with a mortar and pestle. Mix crushed saffron with 1.5 tablespoons of hot water in a cup, put a lid on and leave to steam for a bit. In a bowl add a few spoonful's of rice and add the saffron mixture and stir until rice is yellow.

Spoon remaining white rice into a large serving plate, top with saffron rice. Serve the crispy part on a separate plate.

Joojeh Kabab (Saffron Charcoal Chicken) ~ Ingredients Serves 4

- 1kg skinless, boneless chicken breasts or thighs cut into medium small pieces
- 1 medium onion, grated
- 3-4 tablespoons olive/vegetable oil
- 3-4 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1 teaspoon powdered saffron, dissolved in 2-3 tablespoons of hot water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper

Method

For marinating the chicken: In a large bowl combine the onion, oil, lime juice, liquid saffron, salt, pepper and chicken. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 6-8 hours.

Thread the chicken pieces onto metal skewers, place the skewers on the hot charcoal BBQ grill and continue grilling until chicken pieces are well cooked. Grill some tomatoes and green chillies or peppers for the side.

Serve with rice, natural Greek yogurt and Salad Shirzai.

Continued on next page.

TASTE THE WORLD ~ RECIPE

Prepared by: **Tara Tiba** IRAN/CUBA

Cuban Black Beans ~ Ingredients Serves 8-10

- 1 ½ green peppers, stemmed and seeded
- 10 garlic cloves
- 500 g dried black beans, rinsed and picked over to remove any stones
- Smoked ham hock
- Bay leaves
- 5 teaspoons salt, or to taste
- ¼ cup olive oil
- Slices thick bacon, cut into 1 cm pieces
- Spanish onion, diced
- Jalapeño, stemmed and finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- A few tablespoons distilled white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon turbinado or other brown sugar

Method

Cut 1 green pepper into 1 cm squares. Smash and peel 4 of the garlic cloves. Put the green pepper and garlic into a large pot with the beans, ham hock, bay leaves and 1 tablespoon salt. Add 2 litres water and bring to a boil. Cover the pot and simmer until the beans are tender, an hour or more.

Meanwhile, make a sofrito. Cut the remaining ½ green pepper into ¼ cm dice. Peel and finely chop the remaining garlic. Heat the olive oil in a very large skillet over medium-high heat.

Add the bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until it starts to brown, about 5 minutes. Add the green pepper and onion and cook, stirring, until slightly softened, about 3 minutes.

Add the garlic, jalapeño (leave out the seeds if you don't want it too spicy), oregano, cumin, black pepper and 2 teaspoons salt and stir for another minute. Pour in the vinegar and scrape any browned bits from bottom of pan with a wooden spoon. This is your sofrito.

When the beans are cooked, discard the bay leaf. Remove and set aside the ham hock and let it cool. Transfer 1 cup of beans to small bowl, mash them into a paste with the back of a fork and return to the pot. Add the sofrito, then the sugar. Pull the meat from the ham hock, leaving behind any white sinew or gristle. Chop the ham into ½ cm pieces and return it to the bean pot.

Stir the beans well and bring to a boil over medium heat, then lower to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 20 minutes or so, skimming any foam from the top. Taste for salt and serve with white rice.

TASTE THE WORLD ~ RECIPE

Prepared by: **Tara Tiba** IRAN/CUBA

Cuban Tostones (Fried Plantains)

Crispy fried plantains. A plantain is a very firm banana. Serve as side dish with your meal or as appetizers.

Ingredients

- 5 tablespoons oil for frying
- 1 green plantain
- 3 cups cold water
- Salt to taste

Method

Peel the plantain and cut it into 1–2 cm chunks. Heat the oil in a large skillet. Place the plantains in the oil and fry on both sides; approximately 3 ½ minutes per side.

Remove the plantains from the pan and flatten the plantains by placing a plate over the fried plantains and pressing down. Dip the plantains in water, then return them to the hot oil and fry 1 minute on each side. Salt to taste and serve immediately.

SALAD SHIRAZI

An excellent light side salad to accompany a heavy Persian meal.

Ingredients

- 3 cucumbers
- ½ onion
- 2 tomatoes
- 4 tbsp lime or lemon juice
- 1 tbsp dried mint
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

Method

Cut the cucumbers, onion and tomatoes into very small pieces.

Mix them in a bowl with lemon juice, dried mint, salt and pepper.

Some would also add 2 tbsp of olive oil to the salad, but this is optional.