

How to Transform Yesterday's Dinner Leftovers into Today's Gourmet Rice Casserole

At the request of several friends, I am revealing my secret of a perfect rice casserole. This is a dish capable of satisfying the demanding taste of many, with a versatility that permits many variants, from the vegetarian to the nutritionally balanced that includes the four food groups. It fits today's busy life style, since it will be ready in less than an hour, but it can have the sophisticated appearance of a meal that took the whole day to prepare.

The secret is the careful recycling of yesterday's dinner leftovers in a creative combination with the cereal of the gods, rice. I have never agreed with throwing away food, and perhaps food waste is a serious problem in America, but I do not have much of a taste for heating leftovers in the microwave oven either. The second key is intangible and includes a harmonious blending of creativity and, the most important part, love. My favorite part of the day is when I come home after an arduous day at the university, physically tired and emotionally drained, I changed into comfortable clothes, play good background music, and begin cooking. My body relaxes, my mind forgets about the problems of the day, and my spirit enters into a form of creative meditation; a delightful bliss while softly focusing on the ingredients at hand. It is a joyful moment. Let me share it with you.

Ingredients:

1 lb approximately of yesterday's main dish (beef, chicken, turkey, pork, duck, or lamb).
1 cup (8 oz) of rice (white or brown).
2 cups (16 oz) of water. Reduce amount if the leftover has its own sauce.
1 tbsp. or more of extra virgin olive oil.
1/8 tsp. of salt (reduce amount if meat sauce is salty).

Optional: 1 cup approximately of any combination of vegetables or other meats you have in the refrigerator, such as onion, sweet peppers, garlic, canned chick peas or fava beans, artichokes, cabbage, carrots, or Spanish chorizo; be creative.

Cut any raw vegetables into small pieces and place into a flat and shallow skillet or sauce pan with olive oil. The material of the pan makes a difference in flavor. My favorite is ceramics, but stainless steel or iron will do. Cover and saute *in low heat* for a few minutes until tender. In the meantime, cut meats into small pieces, remove bones, add to vegetables, stir well, cover and cook for a couple of minutes. Add rice, mix well, and then add water and salt mixing well. If cooking **white rice**, as soon as it boils reduce to a minimum, *cover*, and cook for twenty-one minutes. Serve immediately with a side salad and, optionally, a glass of red wine.

If cooking **brown rice**, which I believe is more nutritious and hearty, follow the same procedure as for white rice, except that as soon as it boils, reduce heat a bit (to 8 out of a maximum of 10), cook *uncovered* for ten minutes, then reduce heat to almost minimum, cover and cook for 30 more minutes. Serve immediately with a side salad and, optionally, a glass of red wine; rice loses integrity if overcooked. That is it!

You will see that yesterday's leftovers will come back to life and will yield a unique flavor. Rice has an ability to absorb flavors from meat and vegetables as it cooks slowly in low heat. It is an alchemical process that reminds us of the ancient maxima, *solve et coagula*.

Some recommendations for enjoying rice dishes are in order. Rice should be consumed with wine and, if at all possible, in the company of family or friends. All electronic devices should be turned off. It is a time to communicate with others, while enjoying the food. This means asking questions to others and listening quietly for an answer, without interrupting your friend, without judging. Technology has robbed us of this wonderful fellowship with others. If you must eat alone there is no reason why you cannot enjoy a moment of solitude. Resist the temptation to answer the telephone or to turn on an electronic or television screen. Play your favorite background music; Spanish flamenco guitar goes well with rice. This is a time for yourself; enjoy it. Feel every bite of rice, slowly. Imagine where it was cultivated and the means it took to come to you. Imagine every ingredient in the casserole, its origin, the people who cultivated it. Give thanks to them. Give thanks to the Universal Intelligence for a delightful moment.

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[*RIDING THE WAVES OF THE STOCK MARKET*](#)

[*Applications of Environmental Astronomical Cycles to Market prediction and Portfolio Management*](#)

[*THE THREE SPIRITS*](#)

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[*AN ART OF LIVING*](#) by André Maurois.

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