

SIMPLE PAELLA

Paella sencilla Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

- 9 ounces monkfish tail
- 9 ounces raw shrimp, shells on and heads attached, if available
- scant 1 cup of olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped
- 1 pound 2 ounces live cherrystone clams or 2 ¼ pounds mussels
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and cut into 1-inch squares
- 1 squid, cleaned and cut into thin strips or rings
- 3 cups long-grain rice
- 1 thick slice garlic
- 1 spring fresh parsley
- pinch of saffron threads
- 2 tablespoons warm water
- 1 red bell pepper. Seeded and cut into strips
- scant 1 cup drained canned peas
- ½ chorizo sausage, skinned and sliced
- salt
- lemon wedges



illustration by Javier Mariscal

INSTRUCTIONS

If necessary, remove and discard the gray membrane from the monkfish. Using a sharp knife, cut along either side of the backbone, remove the two fillets, cut into chunks, and set aside. Reserve the bone. Peel the shrimp and reserve the shells and heads, if attached. Set the shrimp aside. Put the monkfish bone and shrimp heads and shells into a pan. Pour in plenty of water; add a pinch of salt, and simmer for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, heat half the oil in a skillet. Add the onion and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes, until softened and translucent. Add the tomato and cook, stirring and breaking up the tomato with the side of the spoon, for 5 minutes more. Allow to cool slightly, then transfer the mixture to a food processor or blender and process to a purée. Scrape the purée into a paella pan or large, heavy skillet. If using the mussels, and they are not pre-cleaned, scrape the shells with the blade of a knife and remove the “beards,” then scrub under cold running water. Discard any shellfish with broken shells or any that do not shut immediately when sharply tapped. Put the shellfish into a pan, pour in ½ cup of water, and bring to a boil. Cover and cook over high heat for 3-6 minutes, until the shells have opened. Remove the pan from the heat and lift out the shellfish with a slotted spoon, reserving the cooking liquid. Remove and discard any shellfish that have not opened and the empty half shells. Set aside the clams or mussels on the half shell. Strain the reserved cooking liquid through a cheesecloth-lined strainer into a bowl. Strain the fish and shrimp stock into the same bowl. Add enough water to make 7 ½ cups, if necessary. Pour the stock into a pan and heat gently, but do not let boil. Pour the remaining oil into the paella pan. Add the green bell pepper and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 3-4 minutes. Add the squid, monkfish, and rice and cook, stirring constantly, for a few minutes, but do not let brown. Season with a pinch of salt and pour in the hot stock. Gently shake the pan to make sure that the liquid is evenly distributed. Pound the garlic, parsley, and saffron in a mortar with a little salt, or process in a mini-food processor. Mix in the warm water, and add to the pan. Gently shake the pan or stir with a spoon so the mixture is evenly incorporated. Stir in the shrimp. When about half the stock has been absorbed, arrange the red bell pepper strips, reserved shellfish, peas, and chorizo attractively in the pan. Continue to cook until the rice is tender and all the stock has been absorbed. (The paella usually takes a total of about 20 minutes from the time the stock is added, but this depends on the type of rice.) Spread out a dampened dishtowel on a work surface. Remove the paella pan from the heat, place it on the dishtowel, and let stand for 5 minutes. Serve the paella with lemon wedges hung over the side of the pan.

Note: Some people like to squeeze a little lemon juice over their paella once it has been served. Others prefer to add a few drops of lemon juice to the rice and stock during cooking, as the lemon helps to keep the rice grains separate.