

Vegetarian Paella

(Pronounced “pie-ai-uhh”)



Debbie and I learned this recipe for paella when we were on our honeymoon in Valencia staying with the sister of Brett’s friend Rick. Making paella in Valencia is kind of like grilling or barbequing in the US, it is a social experience where the food is the center of the conversation often outdoors. Paella is typically a meat dish, chicken or seafood are most common, but fortunately Rosa knew an excellent vegetarian version. The water level in the recipe is the critical thing to manage and can be difficult to explain in a recipe, but it’s worth it! This is a really yummy dish and is well worth the preparation time.

Equipment:

Paella dish or large sauté pan (wide & flat if possible, maybe 5qt size)
Stirring spoon

Pre-preparation items:

fried tomato paste:

1 32oz can tomato puree & olive oil

Mix tomato puree with plenty oil in a microwave dish and cover while cooking.

Make sure it doesn’t burn.

Microwave 10 minutes, stir (repeat 4 times, making sure it doesn’t burn)

Drain off excess oil, put aside.

Pre-fried artichoke hearts

1-2 normal sized cans quartered in water

Lightly pre-fry artichoke hearts in olive oil for a few minutes stirring often and put aside.

Ingredients:

1 cup fried tomato paste (see above)

2 cups of artichoke hearts

Olive oil

1 cup chopped scallions

2 cups green beans in (~1-1/2" segments)

3 cups roughly chopped cauliflower

1-2 cups thinly sliced bell peppers (~2" segments)

1 Tablespoon paprika

4 cups of Valencian or Arborio rice

12 cups of water (3-1 ratio to rice)

1-2 vegetarian bouillon cubes

(cans of vegetarian broth can be used instead of water and bouillon, but go easy on the salt)

few stems saffron (4-5 is plenty)

salt to taste

Directions:

Heat ½ cup olive oil in pan over medium-high heat.

Throw in chopped scallions and cook for 2 min, stirring occasionally.

Throw in green beans & cauliflower and cook for 5-10 min, stirring occasionally.

Add bell peppers and cook for 10 min, stirring occasionally.

Add fried tomato paste and salt and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Move vegetables to edges of the pan as much as possible. Add paprika to center in the oil pool that develops, fry quickly for a few seconds then add the *water* right away. Make note of water level in the pan at this point.

Add bouillon and dissolve in heated water. Turn heat up a little and cook for 10-15 minutes stirring occasionally.

Add pre-grilled artichokes and saffron, sprinkling a very few stems around.

Cook for 10-15 min, stirring occasionally. The water should be roughly back down to the place where noted before, just after adding water.

Move veggies to 2 sides of pan and add rice in a line down the middle. The rice should pile up about 1/2" above the water.

Stir in rice and let boil hard for 5-10 min, stirring occasionally but not too often. If water is low, boil hard for less time and cover with foil or lid. Turn the heat down when the rice begins to emerge from water.

Reduce heat & simmer for 10-15 min, the total cooking time after adding rice should be 18-20 min. If the water is low at this phase the pan should be covered to preserve moisture. Only add more water/broth if it is very dry, too much broth makes it too moist. (The desired texture is slightly firm and lightly "fried" rice instead of completely boiled.)

Let sit for ~10 minutes before eating, letting the flavors blend. Enjoy!