

Persian-Style Basmati Rice

Basmati rice is probably the most familiar of the aromatic long-grain rices. With origins in India, it has found its way to most parts of the world. It is quite low in the starches that make rice sticky, which is why it is often used for pilaf. It has a nutty flavor and a wonderful aroma as it cooks.

2 cups (14 oz/440 g) *basmati* rice, rinsed well and soaked overnight

1 cinnamon stick

3 whole cloves

2 tablespoons safflower oil

½ cup (2 oz/60 g) chopped onion

¼ cup (1 oz/30 g) pistachios, shelled and coarsely chopped

zest of 1 orange

½ cup (3 oz/90 g) dried currants or golden raisins

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

1 potato, peeled and sliced lengthwise ⅛ in (3 mm) thick

1. Preheat an oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. In a medium saucepan, bring 3 cups (24 fl oz/750 ml) of water to a boil. Add the rice, cinnamon and cloves, and reduce to a simmer. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain any excess water, and set the rice aside.

3. Heat the oil in a large, heavy, ovenproof casserole or Dutch oven with a cover. Sauté the onions, pistachios and orange zest until the onions are golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon, and stir into the rice. Add the currants to the rice, and mix.
4. Brush the sides and bottom of the casserole with the melted butter. Arrange the potato slices in the bottom, fitting tightly. Spoon in the rice, packing it tightly in the bottom and pressing it down. Using the handle of a wooden spoon, make 3 deep holes through the rice to allow steam to escape. Cover the rice with a damp, clean towel to absorb the steam, and cover the casserole tightly.
5. Bake for 50 minutes. Remove from the oven, and let the casserole stand for 10 minutes.
6. Uncover, and remove the towel. Place a large serving platter on top, and invert the casserole to serve.

Serves 6

1 cup per serving: Calories 380, Protein 7 g, Carbohydrates 67 g, Fiber 2 g, Total fat 9 g (Saturated 1.5 g, Monounsaturated 2.5 g, Polyunsaturated 4 g), Cholesterol 5 mg, Sodium 5 mg, Iron 20%.

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