

Cooking with



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Pakistani Tribal Pilau

Made with or without meat, this simple yet delicious rice dish is accented with carrots and raisins and although easy to make, there are some time-honored techniques that once mastered will produce a fool-proof dish every time! Traditionally, Pakistanis would cook this with lamb or beef but you can easily substitute chicken or cubed pumpkin or firmer squash like a hubbard squash. The Bunyaad director of production Ehsan Chaman often makes this for special lunches at the Bunyaad warehouse in Lahore, Pakistan. He cooks it in a larger pot and serves over 25 at a time.

Our recipe will serve four to six hungry people.

Ingredients

- 1 ½ - 1 ¾ cups of rice, preferably Basmati (but not instant rice)
- 14-16 oz. of a tender cut of beef such as sirloin or sirloin tips. We often make it with chicken or cubed pumpkin/squash
- ¾ lb. to 1 lb. of carrots (NOT shredded, but cut like matchsticks)
- 2 small onions, chopped
- 1 head of garlic (a full bulb, not a single clove)
- 1 chili pepper (optional)
- 1 ½ teaspoon of whole zeera (cumin) You can substitute ground zeera (cumin) spice
- 2/3 cup oil (vegetable, corn, sunflower, or grapeseed, for example)
- Salt and pepper (approx. 1 tsp of salt - will season the meat to taste)
- ½ - 1 cup of raisins and/or apricots

First, put your rice in a bowl and wash it in lukewarm water until the water rinses fairly clear. Soak the rice in water for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, put a large dutch oven or heavy-clad 8-10 quart pan (with lid) on the stove and cover the bottom of the pan with oil (approximately 2/3 cup oil). Heat to medium or medium high. Add your chopped onions and cook them until just golden. Once onions are golden, add your meat or squash (and sometimes we add both!) and cook until meat is browned and/or squash is softer (not gooshy, but a firm soft). In a side saucepan or tea kettle, bring several cups of water to boil. You will be adding this water to your dish twice as needed.

Once the meat/squash is cooked, add your carrots on top of the meat and sprinkle with salt and zeera/cumin. Cumin seeds are best but ground cumin works as well. Continue to cook over medium heat until the carrots bend slightly but are still fairly firm. Add hot water until the mixture is just covered. At this point, add your whole bulb of garlic into the middle of the mixture and hot pepper if you are adding it. This is not a spicy dish at all so this hot pepper just gives it extra flavor rather than much heat. Without covering, bring mixture back to a boil. Now, sprinkle your raisins on top of this boiling mixture and then carefully and respectfully spoon your rice over this mixture. In Pakistani tradition, you never use a metal spoon with rice as it will break the long grains. Instead, spoon over with a wooden, plastic or rubber spoon or utensil. Once the rice is added, add just a bit of hot water on top of the mixture, not much, just until it's covered ever so slightly.

Once the rice is boiling, use your spoon to go down through the center of the mixture to make little water holes to help all parts of the rice cook evenly. When the water is almost cooked out, bring the rice to the center of the pan, making a mound so that the remaining water can cook off on the sides. Reduce your heat to lower than low, cover the rice with a wet dish towel and cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid. In a little bit, peek in at the rice to see if it is done. It will be done when all of the water is evaporated and the rice grains are standing up as if to say "Look at me! Look at me! Aren't I beautiful!"

Pakistani tribal pilau is always served on a large serving dish so find your favorite large serving dish and invert your pan onto the serving plate, lifting your pan up gently so that the pilau can spill out over your plate and be arranged with rice on the bottom and carrots, meat and raisins on the top. This dish can be garnished with cilantro or fresh mint depending on your taste.

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