

Persian Jeweled Rice

Serves 8 to 10

Adapted from *The Gourmet Cookbook* edited by Ruth Reichl

4 quarts water
1 tablespoon salt
3 1/4 cups white basmati rice
1 cinnamon stick
5 whole cloves
6 black peppercorns
1/2 cup dried cherries, chopped
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
1 stick unsalted butter
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/4 teaspoon saffron threads, gently smashed
1 small yellow onion, chopped
1/3 cup chopped pistachios

Special equipment: cheesecloth, twine, and a thin cloth towel

In a large (5-quart) pot, bring the water and salt to a boil. Wash the rice under running water several times. Make a bouquet garni using cheesecloth and twine, containing the cinnamon stick, whole cloves, and black peppercorns. Once the water is boiling, add the rice and the bouquet garni to the pot. When the water returns to a boil, cook for 5 minutes then drain the rice and let it sit in a sieve. Do not discard the bouquet garni.

Toss the fruit together in a large bowl. In a large Dutch oven, melt the butter over medium heat and stir in the ground cardamom. Remove three tablespoons of the butter and set aside. Add the saffron threads and the yellow onion to the pot and sauté until the onion is soft.

Spread the sautéed onions evenly over the bottom of the pot. Add the rice to the dried fruit and toss to combine. Pour the rice, dried fruit and the bouquet garni over the sautéed onions and butter. Make holes in the rice to the bottom of the pot with the handle of a wooden spoon. Drizzle the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter over the rice.

Cover the pot with a tea cloth and a heavy lid (be careful that the tea cloth is not close to the flame). Cook over medium-low heat for 30 to 35 minutes.

Let the rice sit, off heat, for at least 15 minutes. Scoop the rice out of the pot and into a bowl. If needed, dip the bottom of the pot into a bowl of cold water to loosen the crunchy rice (tah-dig) that is covering the bottom of the pot. Scoop the crunchy rice out of the pot and sprinkle it over the rice. Sprinkle the final dish with the chopped pistachios and serve.

This recipe came from *Minced* at www.mincedblog.com.