

# Arroz Casa Higueras



ARROZ is such a staple dish in Andalucia, and other parts of Spain, of course. It tends to be eaten at lunchtime and is often offered as a tapas in bars and restaurants.

Arroz is a catch-all description of a rice dish; Paella started its life as Arroz a la Valenciana. The dish comes in many guises, using either chicken, rabbit, prawns, squid, mussels, clams, vegetables or any combination of these ingredients. The most important aspect of a good arroz is the stock, and this needs to have bags of flavour as the rice will absorb the saltiness and flavour.

This is our version of arroz that packs as much flavour as possible by cooking chicken joints and prawns separately before adding them, and any juices, to the cooking rice.

Normally, allow for between 60g - 100g of rice per person and 2.5 times as much stock to the quantity of rice, but allow for extra! Our neighbour says that a handful of rice per person is the correct amount, but my hands are somewhat larger than hers!

*For 4 people*

## INGREDIENTS

*400 g Paella or Arborio rice  
750 ml good chicken stock  
250 ml dry white wine  
1 onion, chopped finely  
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped  
2 medium-sized flavoursome tomatoes, peeled, cored and finely chopped  
Pinch of sugar  
Pinch of salt  
1 tsp sweet paprika  
1/2 tsp picante paprika  
Pinch of saffron strands  
8 meaty chicken wing joints or drumsticks  
16 large shell-on prawns (uncooked)*

*For the stock*

*Stock vegetables (celery sticks, leeks, onion, carrots, turnip)  
150 - 200 g Smoked bacon lardons  
Seasoning  
1.5 l of water  
200 ml of dry white wine  
5-6 tbsps Extra Virgin Olive Oil  
Oregano and bay leaves for flavour*

*Chopped flat-leaf parsley and lemon wedges for garnish*

## The stock

The stock can be made a few hours in advance, but it is this process that adds flavour to the chicken and ensures they are nice and tender when added to the rice.

In a large stock pan, fry the bacon lardons in the Olive Oil until they start to crisp up slightly, then add the chopped onion. You don't need to finely chop any of these stock vegetables; just roughly chop them into quarters. *Cont'd.*

Soften the onion and then remove the onion and bacon with a slotted spoon and set to one side. Add the chicken joints to brown them slightly, season well with salt and some sweet paprika and then re-introduce the bacon and onion and add all the other vegetables. Pour in the water and dry white wine and bring to the boil. Add a sprinkling of oregano and two bay leaves and then simmer gently for an hour.

For the arroz, you will need at least 750 ml of stock, so you can reduce the stock towards the end of the cooking time to intensify the flavour, and you can boost the flavour with a chicken stock cube if you wish. Remember that the stock needs to have lots of flavour.

### **The Arroz.**

You don't need to have a paella pan; any large frying pan or wok will do.

In the pan, add 5 or 6 tbsps olive oil and gently soften a finely chopped onion in the oil on a medium heat. Add the chopped tomatoes, chopped garlic, a pinch of sugar and a generous pinch of salt. Stir the onion, garlic and tomatoes together then add the tsp of sweet paprika, the half tsp of picante paprika and a good pinch of saffron strands. Stir well and cook gently to reduce any residual juices from the tomatoes. You want to end up with a rich tomato and onion jam with the lovely colours of paprika and saffron.

Add the rice and stir well to coat every grain of rice with the tomato jam, and then add the 750 ml of chicken stock and the 250 ml of white wine. Stir gently to even out the layer of rice in the stock and then allow to simmer gently without too much additional agitation.

While the rice cooks for the first 15 minutes, you can get the chicken joints ready. Remember, these have been cooked in the chicken stock, so will be tasty and tender, but it adds to the overall flavour if you crisp these up before adding them to the rice.

In another frying pan, heat some olive oil and add the chicken joints. You are not looking to cook them, just crisp up the skin and caramelise the juices. Once the joints have been crisped up on all sides (move them around the pan to try and colour all parts), remove them from the pan and set them aside.

Check the rice at this stage just to make sure it isn't sticking to the bottom of the pan. A certain amount of caramelisation adds to the flavour during the cooking, but you want to prevent the rice from burning. If the rice has soaked up all the stock, add some more; you can be generous.

Next, add 30 g butter and another 2 tbsps olive oil to the same frying pan in which you browned the chicken, and add a finely chopped clove of garlic. Add the prawns and move them around the pan until they change colour. When all the prawns have changed colour to a delicate pink, splash in some white wine and let the heat of the pan cook off any alcohol. You will have a delicious garlicky/wine/butter/prawn juice all ready to be added to the rice.

After the first 15-20 minutes of cooking, the rice will have started to soften to an al dente texture, and most of the stock will have been absorbed. If necessary, add more stock for the last 5 or 10 minutes of cooking so the rice doesn't dry out and burn. Check the seasoning and then add the chicken joints, just laying them on top of the rice, and then pour the prawns and all the juices over the rice and chicken

Allow to cook a little further until the crunch leaves the grains of rice, then turn off the heat.

You can cover the rice with a clean cloth and let it rest for 5 minutes or so before serving. Roughly chop some flat-leaf parsley and sprinkle it over the top and serve with some lemon wedges and chunky white bread.

There are so many variations to this recipe - you can add vegetables to the rice for the last 10 minutes of cooking - asparagus, green beans, peas or broccoli - and mussels, clams or squid are also firm favourites.

Be brave and experiment with your own favourite ingredients.