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PAELLA
PARTY

ESPAÑA

Paella Party!

My particular interest in paella began when I first began to read about it years ago. The more I read, the more I realized just how far the average American version of the dish had strayed from the intent and integrity of the Spanish original. The dish starts out as something special. And it ends up as far from the original as Taco Bell is to authentic Mexican. Granted, most Paella Americana had kept enough of the Spanish look to be able to get away with using the name "paella." But in the course of its trans-Atlantic crossing, the true greatness of the dish had been lost. Submerged in a shallow sea of shortcuts, paella over here was so often altered to fit American tastes and available ingredients, that it would probably have been unrecognizable to a Spaniard. By the time you get to this point it would be cheaper and easier to stick some surimi atop Rice-a-Roni, serve it in a paella pan and be done with it.



The thing about paella is that, although it's inevitable one of the most recognized elements of traditional Spanish cooking, hardly anyone over here has ever had a good one. Which bums me out because the

truth of the matter is that, done well, it's really pretty easy to make, and marvelously delicious to eat. My challenge, I guess, is to help get you past the inevitable fear of the unknown, and, by explaining some simple keys, get people like you and me to make paella a regular part of their eating habits. This isn't just lip service. I'm convinced that good paella is worthy of entry into our regular routines. No, not something you whip up for the kids at a moment's notice. But still, a dish you could do up on a weekend, for a football crowd, or a family get together.

how do i know you can do it?

Look. I've been teaching this dish to paella neophytes for nearly fifteen years. And in the process I know I've helped hundreds of people who started out knowing, literally, nothing about paella, come back to tell me that, with a trial or two under their culinary belts they'd produced a perfectly marvelous paella. If they learned to do it that quickly, so can you.

Paella in Valencia

Unlike pseudo-authentic Italian dishes like spaghetti and meatballs, paella really is an incredibly popular dish in its home territory. Whether they're eating it at home or at their favorite restaurants, most Valencianos seem to really love it. Of course exactly what goes into the dish they love isn't quite so simple to ascertain. In it's homeland, there is no handbook on paella preparation. Unlike classical French cuisine there is no "right" way, no culinary dictates that determine what may or may not be in a paella. Instead, paella long ago arrived at that level of local legend and lore where everyone agrees on how important it is, but never on exactly how it should be made or what ingredients ought to be in it. Word has it that every Valencian has three recipes for paella in their head—one from their spouse, one from their grandmother, and one of their own—and pretty much every native I've ever asked has had at least that many. The modern addition to this axiom is that most Valencianos also have their favorite place to call for carryout paella. Here we call for pizza. In Valencia they pick up the phone and order out paella. It's delivered right in the pan (with deposit of course), ready to devour as soon as you drive home.

Paella history

Paella has been a part of cooking in Valencia for centuries. Most folks seem to agree that the development of the original paellas was pretty much a practical affair, developed along the shores of La Albufera, the freshwater lagoon that comes in from the coast. Paella's roots are strictly working class. Working folk –fishermen, shepherds, etc. –cooking readily available ingredients over an open fire. Because it was developed long before Columbus brought the produce of the Americas back to Iberia, paella almost always relies on ingredients of European, African or Asian origins. Best I can figure from reading and talking to Valencianos the old time ancient and “authentic” paella of history was likely made with saffron-scented rice, topped with snails, eels and green beans.

Paella plays a big part in the social scheme of Valencia. Today, paella cooking is generally reserved for Sundays or holidays. It's considered too time consuming for a busy family during the week. Cooking paella is sort of like barbecuing in the States—it's the one dish that men in Valencia may well specialize in.

To this day paella remains popular as an outdoor dish. There are many Spaniards who swear it tastes better cooked over a wood fire, and many Valencian restaurants still cook paellas outdoors. Its affinity for open air cooking makes paella is an advantage to American cooks, since most of our stoves are a bit too small to really effectively accommodate a paella pan of any size.

4 critical keys to authentic Paella

The point is that paella isn't really a recipe—it's a path to eating enjoyment. Like a good jazz number paella has a basic background of structure you've got to build on, but on top of which you've got lots of room for creative improvisation. But to pull off a good paella, you've got to get those structural elements right in order to have the freedom to improvise on top.

So, yes, paella making does allow the cook plenty of room for creativity in selecting ingredients there are three immutable, unquestioned keys to success that you don't want to ignore. You must:

Use the proper pan,
The right rice,
Find yourself some superior (i.e., authentic) saffron.
You must follow the basic paella cooking concepts.

Messing with these guidelines won't bring on a nuclear disaster. You'll still be serving something. It may even taste good. But it definitely will not be proper paella.

#1 the Paella Pan



A paella pan is a round, steel pan with short, shallow sides, maybe an inch or so high. Its short sides slope outward at about a thirty degree angle to its flat bottom. A pair of simple wire handles are positioned at opposite sides of the pan. It looks not unlike some sort of medieval cymbal you'd expect to see played in a Renaissance revival parade. The shape is essential—its shallowness and sloped sides allows the rice to cook without ever steaming and turning mushy. Try to cook paella in a deep-sided skillet and you'll end up with non appealingly mushy rice. You can find a good paella pan for under \$40, a small investment in good eating.

Paella restaurants in Spain hang dozens of them from their racks. Most have pans of widely varying sizes—the chefs must be able to cook the right size paella depending on how many in the party which orders it. A paella for six, for example, would cook well in a 18-inch pan. The pan isn't just a cooking implement; it's also the serving dish. Unlike most dishes, paella is never transferred to individual platters before being brought to the table. Instead your waiter would arrive with the entire pan intact, just as it was when it left the stove ready to place it on the table. To protect the table's surface (or the tablecloth) people use wood trivets, metal rings, or my favorite, empty egg cartons.

key ingredient #2 - the rice

Because it was developed long before Columbus brought the produce of the Americas back to Iberia, paella almost always relies on ingredients of European, African or Asian origins. To their credit, the Valencians were able to take this seemingly innocuous ingredient and, over centuries of cooking, convert it into a dish of such magnificence as paella.

I've already dwelled on the importance of the rice at length, so for now I'll leave it at this. Please don't make paella without using authentic Spanish rice.

key ingredient #3 - Saffron

Like so many other special ingredients of the food world, saffron is frequently misunderstood and all too often misrepresented.

It's legendary cost per pound, along with its rather unusual, thread-like appearance, has severely limited its acceptance in America. Saffron is often avoided by cooks who aren't sure what to do with it, and have little interest in embarrassing themselves in the kitchen by trying to solve its "mysteries" while the guests sit in the next room waiting for dinner. Which is too bad because when saffron is separated from its mystique, it is neither off-puttingly expensive nor a particularly difficult ingredient to master.

Saffron is the stamen of the flower *crocus sativus*, a relative of the crocus we all know in this country. It has been used as both a dye and as a spice for centuries. The incredible amount of labor involved in harvesting it has given saffron a permanent place in the rolls of culinary high society. How much work? Well just so that you can impress your friends, here's those amazing saffron statistics (somehow I doubt that Spanish kids memorize these like I used to memorize batting averages but it's a nice culinary fantasy for food freak like me): each *crocus sativus* flower bequeaths to the world three—count 'em—three stamen. In a day's work an expert picker might bring in 10 to 12,000 flowers. After the stamens have been removed and the saffron dried to remove moisture and

preserve it, the day's yield will be about 2 to 3 ounces! It takes 70 to 80,000 flowers to make a pound of saffron. And an entire acre of saffron produces only 8 pounds of saffron a year!

So, yes, it's a lot of work and yes if you buy a pound, it's expensive. Fortunately you'll probably never buy more than a gram or so of saffron at a time. To make a paella for six takes a mere half a teaspoon. And although everyone goes on about how, "saffron is the most expensive spice in the world," the reality here is that the few dollars it will cost you are a fraction of the cost of the entire meal. So really, don't skimp on the saffron. Far better to take a flyer on the seafood, but stick to the basics of paella – real Valencia rice, real saffron, proper cooking in a proper pan—than to sacrifice the soul of the dish just to stick a few shrimp on top.

Although many people are under the misapprehension that saffron is merely a coloring agent, it is actually essential for its flavor. Nothing in the world tastes like saffron. It has a truly exquisite flavor, that permeates any dish with a unique combination of musk and majesty. As with the flavor of truffles, saffron is almost impossible to describe effectively. It's ethereal, almost other-worldly. You have to taste it.

There are two basic methods of getting saffron into your paella. One is to toast the saffron in a dry pan, or in the oven, for a minute or so, then to crumble it onto the rice as it is sautéing. I prefer the other method, which is to simmer the saffron threads in your broth. Although most cooks give up on their saffron cooking only a few minutes after it's been added to a dish, the threads will continue to slowly share more and more of their flavor for up to an hour of cooking. Only when the threads have turned from their natural purplish-red to nearly white in color have they surrendered to the pot their full fragrance and flavor. Which means that you'll want to start simmering the saffron in your broth (more about the broth in a minute) a good hour or so before you're going to need it. You can of course do the simmering in advance and keep your broth in the refrigerator until you're ready to use it.

Ironically, modern day Spaniards have become accustomed to using what they call "colorant" in place of saffron. It could be safflower,

turmeric or any number of other ingredients, but it isn't saffron (though it's sometimes misleadingly called "Turkish saffron"). It's become so commonplace that many people I've talked don't even flinch at recommending it. "I don't think anyone is cooking with saffron in Spain anymore. It is too expensive and there is no saffron anymore. It's very expensive," one serious culinarian told me with a straight face. This is the same sort of strangeness that's got Italian cooks hooked on bouillon cubes. Don't buy it. Real saffron is so, so much more than just yellow food coloring.

key #4 - Proper cooking

Paella isn't just about the ingredients. It's also a method of cooking. And while the ingredients are easily varied to meet the taste and budget of the cook, the method of cooking must be left intact. In a minute I'll take you through the entire process of paella making in detail. But in a nutshell, there's a couple of key components:

The dry rice must be sautéed in olive oil in the paella pan. This allows the rice to pick up the flavors of the other ingredients that have already been sautéed. And it starts the starches in the rice breaking down.

A few minutes later, boiling broth is added to the pan. If the broth isn't boiling, the rice will cool off and turn mushy. Stir well to mix and then put your spoon away. Once the liquid has been stirred into the mix, all stirring ceases. The rice cooks, the steam rises, then escapes from the shallow pan, the bottom layer of rice starts to stick to the bottom of the pan forming the socarrat, the crisp, golden crust of rice that is the part of the paella that Spaniards fight over.

Other Paella ingredients

As I've already said, the essence of paella is not the fancy seafood that has come to be associated with it in this country. Instead, paella is a dish that is meant to highlight whatever is best at the market, a dish which can easily be adapted to the particular idiosyncrasies and finances of the cook. Paella doesn't have to be expensive. It doesn't have to have seafood. It doesn't have to have meat. Start with the right rice and authentic saffron and the rest is up to you.

The paella recipe that we've cooked over the years at Zingerman's features both seafood and meat (take note, though, that there are Valencians who will argue that the two should not be mixed). We use chicken, shrimp, Spanish chorizo sausage, mussels, clams, roasted peppers, parsley and green peas. But you can easily prepare a vegetarian paella, say with asparagus, fresh fava beans, roasted red and yellow peppers or any number of other vegetables. Or you can make a country-style Valencia paella with rabbit, snails, chicken and green beans. You get the idea—you make the call. There are literally hundreds of ways to play out your paella fantasies.

Regardless of recipe, the better the broth you use, the more flavorful the finished dish. Certainly you can use water, which is more basic. Or you can use some sort of bouillon cubes, though if they're of inferior quality, you may just be better off simply simmering saffron in water for an hour or so. You can make paella with chicken, seafood or vegetable stock. If you can buy homemade chicken stock, it beats the heck out of the canned stuff. And of course if you've got the time you can make your own. Regardless of which stock—or just plain water— you use, I recommend that you simmer your saffron in the stock for a good hour before you start the paella.

Realistically, I know that paella isn't a dish that you whip up at home after a long day of work. It's a dish for an occasion—anything from a family feast to just a few friends getting together will do—when you want to serve something a little special. Having some friends over for a weekend get together? Looking for a new twist on a holiday dinner? Having a big group over after a game? Or better yet, invent an occasion to give you an excuse to make—and of course eat—paella. This is the paella we've been cooking on the patio at Zingerman's for years. It's a derivation of a recipe taught to us by Catalan chef Antonio Buendia.

Zingerman's Patio Paella

Serves 6

19 inch paella pan

½ teaspoon of Spanish saffron threads

Approx. 6-12 cups of broth (chicken or fish) – the volume depends on the type of rice you use.

Extra virgin olive oil

12 large shrimp in the shell

2-3 links of Spanish chorizo - cut into ¼ inch slices

6-8 chicken thighs, preferably free range

3 cups of Spanish rice (unwashed) –the traditional Valencia portion is two handfuls of dry rice per person - about 75-100 grams (so a paella for six would be about 600 grams or about 21 ounces, or about 6 cups)

Sea salt to taste

18 clams (scrubbed)

18 mussels (scrubbed and bearded)

6 Spanish pimientos (roasted red peppers, preferably piquillos) - coarsely chopped.

Sprigs of fresh parsley

3 lemons cut into wedges

COOKING a Paella

where to cook

If you're up to the occasion, the traditional—and certainly, the most romantic—way to cook a paella is outdoors over an open wood fire. The Valencians have elaborate arguments over which type of wood is best—some say clippings from the grapevines, others argue for wood from the orange trees, both of which are grown in great quantity in the region. At least in Michigan, it's tough to find either of those, but I suppose if you're out in California you'd have a pretty good shot at it. If you want to try a slightly easier technique, the Weber Kettle on your patio makes a great paella cooking tool. It's got the right round shape, and you can adjust the

grill's height as you cook to keep the heat at the appropriate level.

You can, of course, cook a paella indoors on your stove. For all but the smallest paella pans, you'll likely want to spread the pan over two burners and turn it frequently as it cooks to keep some approximation of evenly distributed heat.

Starting to cook

The paella preparation starts with the broth. Simmer the saffron threads in your broth for at least an hour. The saffron will continue to give you flavor until the threads turn white in color. Remember that if you reduce the broth beyond – you may need to add some water to get back to the right broth to rice ratio. This simmering of the saffron in the broth can be done days in advance.

(Alternatively, many cooks in Spain simply drop the saffron threads straight into the pan during cooking. Others mash the saffron along with garlic or shallots in a mortar and pestle. Either of these techniques works well. Both are better suited for anyone cooking without much advance prep time. Still, if you've got the time, I find that you get bigger flavor, brighter color and bolder aromas when you let it really cook with the broth.)

When the broth is approaching the appropriate state of readiness, you can start the actual cooking. Start with a well-seasoned paella pan. Set it over the heat. When the pan is hot add the olive oil. If the pan is as hot as it should be, the oil will heat up very quickly. Don't let the oil start to smoke or you'll have to drain it, wipe the pan and start over. Always use extra virgin olive oil—the flavor of the oil will impact every ingredient it comes into contact with, and to start a paella with an inferior oil is like trying to build a home on a base of quicksand. I'm not saying you have to use any of that \$35 a bottle estate oil you just bought. But I am saying, always use extra virgin oil, and that the better the oil, the better the paella.

Add the shrimp to the pan. Sprinkle with a little sea salt and sauté until the shrimp's shells have turned pink, and the shrimp are almost cooked through. Don't overcook. Remove the shrimp and set aside. Don't skip

the salt—it's the secret key to the paella treasure chest. Without salt you'll have everything you want in the pan, but you won't unlock the true wonder of the paella flavor. Just a bit of sea salt sprinkled onto the seafood, meat or rice as it sautées will make all the difference in the world.

Next, add the chicken thighs to the pan. Cook 'til well-browned on all sides. Add the chorizo sausage, and stir well. (Be sure to use Spanish—not Mexican—chorizo. The Spanish version is cured, ready to eat, coarsely cut pork sausage that's scented with paprika and garlic. A small amount sautéed in the paella pan in hot olive oil early in the cooking process adds a wealth of flavor to the finished paella.) Simmer for a few minutes.

Now you're ready to add the rice. The traditional Valencia rule of thumb is two handfuls of dry rice—about 3-4 ounces by weight or about ½ cup by volume—per person. Since I like the rice best, I usually go heavy on the rice, lighter on the other ingredients. It's imperative though that the rice not be too high up the sides of the pan. The general guideline is to never get it higher than the rivets that hold the handles to the side of the pan. If you pack the pan with rice, the grains will end up steaming, and the texture will be ruined.

Stir the rice to coat it with the oil. The oil has absorbed the flavors of the shrimp, chicken and chorizo, and will pass the flavor “baton” on to the rice. Add a bit more sea salt (to taste). Let the rice sauté for four or five minutes—it should start to turn transparent, maybe even slightly brown. This quick sauté will give the finished rice added firmness when the paella is finished.

Now add the broth, about a cup for every half-cup of rice you've used. It's important that the broth be boiling when you add it, or you'll suddenly slow the cooking, end up with a mushy paella. Exactly how much liquid to add is hard to say—it depends on the size of your pan, the intensity of the heat, the age (and hence, moisture content) of the rice.

REMEMBER: the paella will be done when the rice is “al dente.” You don't want to overcook it, so logic dictates that it's a lot easier to add a bit of

extra broth if your rice isn't quite done, than it is to try to spoon excess broth off the top before the rice overcooks. Always have more broth on hand than you'll need, and always add a little less to the pan than you'll probably end up using.

watching the Paella cook

Once the broth is added, and you've given the rice a good stir, you can set your spoon aside. No more stirring is allowed. As the paella cooks, watch the rice grains swell up while they absorb the broth. Be sure to stick your nose over the pan and take note of the aroma—it's like walking through an open-air market. If you weren't hungry when you started cooking you will be after you smell the saffron and other scents rising up from the pan. It's important that the heat stay high enough that the liquid is going at a good medium boil throughout the cooking.

I suggest that you use a fork to pull a grain or two of rice out of the pan every few minutes to taste—check for doneness and salt. It's interesting to see how the texture of the rice progresses toward softness, and it'll help you to avoid overcooking.

When the rice is about half done, start to arrange the clams and mussels—seam side down—in a ring around the edge of the pan. A few minutes later lay the shrimp and the pimientos (roasted red peppers) in the center. If you're using peas, sprinkle those across the top. Garnish with the parsley.

Standard Spanish rice should take about 16 to 18 minutes to cook. Better grades, like Bomba, may take half again as long. Really though, the paella is done when the rice is al dente—cooked, but still a bit firm in the middle—not when the timer goes off. How firm is up to you, I prefer it on the firmer side, but definitely do not overcook it. Mushy rice is a sure sign of a poor paella. Ultimately, you have to taste test the rice to tell when it's done—cooking times always have to be altered based on the age of the rice, the size of the pan, the intensity of the heat, etc.

Remember the rice will continue to cook after you take the pan off the heat, and the paella needs to rest a few minutes before it's ready to serve, so be careful not to overcook it.

When the rice is al dente, take the paella pan off the heat. If you've got a big table set it right in the middle where everyone can appreciate its incredible color and aroma. It's important to let the paella rest for a few minutes before you serve it. Don't ignore this all-important element. A friend from Valencia insisted that, "Many people try to eat it too fast. But you must let the flavors relax."

Socarrat

If you're lucky, when you start serving, you'll find a layer of golden, crispy rice stuck to the bottom of the pan. Don't worry, you didn't burn it. This is the socarrat, the most prized part of the paella. Spaniards have been known to argue over it.

In her guidebook, *Discovering Spain*, Penelope Casas relates a socarrat story: "We are already enjoying our paella...when our waiter brings us a small dish of golden brown, crunchy rice that has been scraped from the bottom of the pan. This is the quintessence of the paella, presented to us as if we were about to receive Communion or participate in the rites of a secret society. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he proudly announces, 'here is the socarrat.'"

Personally, I prefer the more egalitarian technique taught to me by Enrique Grau. After bringing the finished paella to the table to present it in all its visual glory, he used the back of a wooden serving spoon to push up the socarrat from the bottom of the pan and distribute it evenly throughout the paella. This accomplishes two important tasks: it avoids undue conflict over possession for the socarrat. And it also creates an intriguing textural contrast between the tender but firm rice in the middle of the pan, and the crispy brown grains that came off the bottom.

When you do serve, make sure that everyone gets a wedge of fresh lemon. Insist (politely, but firmly) that they squeeze some over the paella before

they eat. Don't forget this part. The freshly squeezed lemon adds a subtle freshness and zip to this paella.

Traditionally, a paella would be eaten straight from the pan, which is set in the middle of the table (like old time polenta eating in Italy). Typically, you use wooden spoons to push some of the rice up against the side of the pan. The rice sort of sticks to the inside of the spoon, and then you lift it to your mouth to enjoy. If you've ever been to North Africa, this is much the same technique Moroccans use to eat with their fingers. Not surprising since the Arab influence on Spanish eating is so strong.

what to Serve with a Paella

Although paella making is assumed to be a long and difficult task, it really doesn't have to be. If you make a simple paella with, say, chorizo and a few vegetables, you can go from start to finish in under an hour. And the great thing is that, to quote Enrique Grau, "All you need is salad and paella." I'll cast my vote for a loaf of good bread to go with it, but really, that's about it.

Of course if you want to turn your paella into a major party event there are all sorts of Spanish tapas—or appetizers—you could put on the table before the meal. Cheeses, olives, sausages, Jamón Serrano, salads...just about anything actually.

- Ari

Chicken and Chorizo Paella (19" pan) — — —

4 quarts hot chicken broth
½ teaspoon saffron
1 cup olive oil
1 whole small chicken, cut into small pieces (remove back bone)
7 ounces Spanish chorizo, sliced thin
1 tablespoon sea salt
1 clove of garlic, minced
1 small onion, diced small
2 tomatoes, diced small
2/3 lbs green beans, cut into 2 inch pieces
1.5 pounds Calasparra or Bomba rice
1/3 pound roasted piquillo peppers (about 4 peppers)
3 sprigs fresh thyme
3 sprigs fresh rosemary
1 lemon

Vegetable Paella (19" pan) — — — — —

4 quarts vegetable stock or saffron water
½ teaspoon saffron
1 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon sea salt
1 clove of garlic, minced
1 small onion, diced small
2 tomatoes, diced small
1 pound green beans, cut into 1 inch pieces
1 pound eggplant, diced small
1 pound carrots, diced small
1 pound zucchini, diced small
1.5 pounds Calasparra or Bomba rice
¼ pound roasted piquillo peppers (about 3 peppers)
6 sprigs fresh thyme
6 sprigs fresh rosemary
12 sprigs fresh parsley
1 lemon

Seafood Paella (19" pan)

4 quarts hot chicken broth

½ teaspoon saffron

1 cup olive oil

1 pound of shrimp (sized 15-20 per pound and with the shells on)

7 ounces mild Spanish chorizo, sliced thin

1 tablespoon sea salt

1 clove of garlic, minced

1 small onion, diced small

2 tomatoes, diced small

2/3 lbs green beans, cut into 2 inch pieces

1.5 pounds Calasparra or Bomba rice

2 pounds fresh mussels

1/3 pound roasted piquillo peppers (about 4 peppers)

3 sprigs fresh thyme

3 sprigs fresh rosemary

1 lemon

Procedure

1. In a large saucepan, bring the broth, saffron threads and 1 cup water to a boil. Reduce heat to maintain a medium simmer.
2. Set a well-seasoned paella pan over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot add the olive oil. (If the pan is as hot as it should be, the oil will heat up very quickly. Don't let the oil start to smoke.)
3. **seafood** - Add the shrimp to the pan. Sprinkle with a little sea salt and sauté until the shells have turned pink and the shrimp are almost cooked through. Don't overcook. Remove the shrimp and set aside.
4. Don't skip the salt—it's the "secret" key to the paella treasure chest. Keep tasting and checking the salt level as you go and add more as needed.
5. **chicken/chorizo** - Add the chicken to the pan and cook until well browned on all sides, 6 to 8 minutes.

6. chicken/chorizo & seafood - Add the chorizo sausage and stir well. Sauté for 4 to 5 minutes until lightly browned.

7. Add garlic, onion, tomato and green beans (and all vegetables except the roasted peppers for **Vegetable Paella**) and stir well.

8. Add the rice. The level of the rice should not be higher than the handle rivets. If you pack the pan with rice, the grains will steam and the texture will be ruined. Stir to coat it with the oil. Add a bit more sea salt to taste. Sauté for 4 or 5 minutes or until it starts to turn transparent, maybe even very slightly golden.

9. Now add the broth. Start with 5 cups. Exactly how much liquid to add is hard to say—it depends on the size of your pan, the intensity of the heat, the age (older rice is drier and, hence, has a lower moisture content). It's a lot easier to add a bit of extra broth if your rice isn't quite done than it is to try to spoon excess broth off the top. Always have more broth on hand than you'll need, and always start out by putting a bit less broth in the pan than you expect to use. Once you've added your broth give the rice a good stir until everything is evenly distributed. Keep the heat high enough so the liquid stays at a medium boil throughout cooking.

10. After 10 to 12 minutes, use a fork to fish out a grain or two of rice from the pan every few minutes to check for doneness and salt. Avoid over-cooking.

11. seafood - When the rice is about half done, start to arrange the mussels seam side down in a ring around the edge of the pan.

12. After 2 to 3 minutes, place the roasted red peppers and shrimp (**seafood**) in the center.

13. Sprinkle the fresh herbs across the top.

14. If the broth has all been absorbed before the rice is ready, add a bit of additional liquid to the pan to allow the rice to keep cooking. Standard Spanish rice should take about 16 to 18 minutes to cook. Better grades,

such as Calasparra or Bomba, may take 25. The rice should be al dente—cooked, but still a bit firm in the middle. How firm is up to you. Remember the rice will continue to cook in the pan, even off the heat, before you dig in.

15. When the rice is al dente, take the paella pan off the heat. Discard any unopened mussels. (*seafood*)

16. Set the paella on a trivet in the middle of the table, where everyone can appreciate its incredible color and aroma. Let the paella rest for a few minutes before you serve it. When you start eating, the paella should be between hot and room temperature.

17. Serve with the lemon wedges and insist (politely but firmly) that guests squeeze them over the paella before they eat.





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