

Harvest Chicken on Rice

The taste of the Fall Harvest in a filling single dish.

Adjust spice mixture ratios and quantity of nuts to taste. Cooking times will vary according to equipment available. A vegetarian/vegan substitute for the chicken is also possible.

Ingredients:

- 2 boneless skinless chicken thighs (breasts can be sub'd - if only skin-on available remove skin & fry up with some salt & pepper for a quick snack)
- 2 butternut squash or small pumpkins
- 0.5 cup long-grain wild rice
- 0.5 cup pine nuts
- 0.5 cup cashew nuts
- 20 baby carrots
- 1 package baby spinach
- 1 bunch fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoons smoked paprika
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 0.5 tablespoon dry ground tarragon
- 0.5 tablespoon dry ground sage
- 1.5 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 0.5 teaspoon cardamom
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon salted butter
- 0.5 cup whole milk
- 0.25 cup white wine

Preparation:

Lower the rice into a small pot with 1 cup water and a half teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil then reduce heat to a simmer and cover. Cook until just al-dente (about 25 minutes or until water is absorbed).

Quarter the squash/pumpkins and remove the seeds and strings (save seeds for later roasted snacks). Place sections on a baking tray and under a broiler on the top oven rack (leave at least 3 inches clearance) for 3-5 minutes to get a little roasting on top. Take out and reduce oven temperature to 350F. In a small bowl, lower 1 tablespoon of the paprika along with all of the onion powder, cardamom, cinnamon, white pepper, and a half teaspoon salt and whisk together. Brush or hand-rub 2 tablespoon of the olive over the quarters, coating the flesh thoroughly. Then vigorously rub the spice mixture over and into the roasted quarters without disrupting the flesh. Place in the 350F oven for about 15-20 minutes or until fairly soft.

Roast up cashews and pine nuts in a heavy pan or cast iron skillet and set aside.

When the quarters are done take out and let cool enough to handle, then shred out the meat with a fork. Combine the meat with the cashews, add a quarter cup of water, and blend until a smooth puree. Lower the butter and milk into a medium pot over medium heat. When the butter is melted, add the white wine and let the alcohol cook out for a few minutes, stirring frequently. Next pour in the puree and mix thoroughly. When the sauce is just bubbling, slowly stir in the cheese until it's all melted and thoroughly incorporated.

By this time the rice will be done. Stir in pine nuts and cover then turn off heat

In a bowl, lower the sage, tarragon, white pepper, black pepper, cumin, and a half teaspoon salt and whisk together. Take the room-temperature chicken and brush or hand-rub a half-tablespoon of olive oil on all over the chicken. Then vigorously rub all over with the spice mixture, being sure it penetrates the top layer of meat. Place the chicken on a baking pan brushed with olive oil. To cook, set the oven up to 425F (375F for breasts, covered with foil) and bake for about 20 minutes. The temperature in the thickest part of the meat should be approximately 165F

Steam up 10 baby carrots per serving in salted water. Once just tender, transfer to small saucepan on medium heat with a tablespoon melted butter. Sprinkle with dill and toss.

Plate with a single thickness bed of baby spinach, washed and dried, in a circular pattern. Spoon a generous mound of rice and nuts mixture into center, flatten top, make a small depression in center of mound, and ladle a small amount of the cheese sauce into it. Take the baby carrots and place in a radial pattern around the rice mound. Place chicken in center, and then generously ladle the chicken with the sauce. Garnish with chopped fresh parsley.

Serve with a fresh greens salad and sliced cherry tomatoes with a light vinaigrette and a light white wine of choice such as savignon blanc, pinot grigio, or viognier.

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