

Seafood Paella (Serves 6)

Recipe by Bridgette Hafner

Don't add too many ingredients - remember, paella is all about the rice and the ingredients are there simply to flavour it. Do not stir - I repeat - do not stir paella. It must have a dark crust on the bottom to impart that slightly smoky, deep flavour.

The resting time at the end is crucial so the flavours can marry. A rested paella always tastes much better than one hot from the stove.

Ingredients

6 tbsp olive oil
6 large prawns
250g calamari or cuttlefish, cleaned and cut into rings
Salt and pepper

Sofrito

1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves of garlic, chopped
3 tomatoes, skinned and finely chopped
1/2 cup water

Paella

1/4 tsp saffron
2 tbsp warm water
2 tsp sweet paprika
1 litre water
1/3 cup peas
400g Spanish rice – this is an essential and the success of the paella
150g white fish (ling, flathead or snapper), cut into large pieces
12 mussels, cleaned
2 lemons, in wedges
2 tbsp chopped parsley

Method

- Heat the paella pan. Add 2 tbsp of the olive oil, then the prawns and calamari.
- Cook for a few minutes until brown all over and season with salt and a little pepper.
- Remove to a bowl.

For the sofrito (you can cook this up the day before is time pressed)

- Add the rest of the oil to the same pan and, when hot, add the onion. Cook over a medium heat, stirring occasionally until the onion has softened and is golden.
- Now add the garlic, cook for about 7-8 minutes until lightly coloured and softened.
- Now add the tomatoes, season liberally with salt and pepper and cook slowly until the sofrito has reduced and there is no liquid left.
- Add about 1/2 cup of water and continue to cook until the liquid has again reduced. This should all take about 45 mins and can be done ahead of time.

- The sofrito should have a concentrated flavour and pulpy consistency.

For the paella

- While the sofrito is cooking, gently heat the saffron in a small pan for a few minutes, until it changes colour and becomes fragrant. Be careful as it burns easily.
- Remove from the heat, crush with the back of a spoon and add to 2 tbsp warm water.
- Add the prawns, calamari and paprika to the finished sofrito and cook, stirring for a few minutes, then add the water and bring to the boil. Taste mixture, adding salt if necessary.
- Add the saffron, peas and the rice and bring to the boil. Stir briefly then turn heat to low.
- Place the pieces of fish and mussels over the rice and poke them in a little so they can cook. Do not stir. Cook gently for about 10 minutes.
- Remove from the heat and cover with a tea-towel for 10 mins, then remove the tea-towel and allow to rest for another 5-10 mins before serving.

Squeeze over the lemon juice and sprinkle with chopped parsley.

To serve

Serve directly from the pan.

Serves 6.