

SEAFOOD PAELLA

Everyone needs a great party dish and one of my favorites is seafood paella. One bite transports me to the Spanish seaside town of Torremolinos where I not only had my first taste of paella, but also one magical evening on the back of a motorcycle with a guy named Enrico. But that's another story.

□At the base of this dish is *sofrito*, an aromatic vegetable base used to enhance many Spanish dishes. You can find it pre-made in the supermarket, but I prefer to make my own.

□SOFRITO INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup, plus drizzle, of extra-virgin olive oil

3 large yellow onions, rough chop

6 medium cloves garlic, rough chop

2 large tomatoes, rough chop

Salt and pepper, to taste

□PAELLA INGREDIENTS

Extra virgin olive oil, preferably □

8 large whole shrimp, peeled with heads and tails intact, deveined□

8 large clams

8 mussels

1 link of Portuguese sausage or Linguiça*

3 clove garlic, finely chopped□

¼ cup Sofrito□

1 cup Spanish bomba rice□

2 pinches of saffron□

3 ½ cups hot seafood stock**

Salt to taste

Chopped parley and chives for garnish

□SOFRITO PREPARATION

Heat large skillet and add ½-cup olive oil. Once oil is shimmering, add in onions and sauté for 8-10 minutes until translucent. Add in tomatoes and garlic, allowing some of the liquid from the tomatoes to evaporate, another 8-10 minutes. Lower the temperature to a simmer and continue to cook until the sofrito is a deep redish color, about 30 minutes longer. Allow to cool for ten minutes. Place all ingredients in a blender and pulse until chunks are small, but the same size. Do not pulverize into a liquid.

□This should make about 2 cups. You can refrigerate the sofrito in an airtight container for up to 5 days. I usually split it into four portions and freeze it for easy use. It's not just for paella. It makes a great base for pasta sauces and stews too.

PAELLA PREPARATION

Heat 3 tablespoons of the olive oil in a 12-inch paella pan over high heat. Add the shrimp and sausage, searing for about 1 minute each side and set aside. Add another tablespoon of oil and stir in the garlic, cooking for 1 minute. Add the sofrito and rice and cook for 1 minute more, stirring to coat the rice. Add the hot stock and increase heat to high.

□Once the stock is boiling, crush the saffron between your fingers and add to stock. Add salt to stock.

Stir the rice during the first 5-minutes while boiling, then lower the heat to a simmer. The rice should take about 20-25 minutes to cook. DO NOT STIR THE RICE AGAIN.

□After the first 8 minutes, place the clams and sausage on top, pushing them into the rice. Cover the pan with aluminum foil to help the clams steam. 4 minutes later add the mussels, pushing them into the rice. Cover with foil again. 3 minutes after that add the shrimp, pushing them into the rice. Cover with foil until the full 20-25 minutes are done.

□The paella is finished when the rice has absorbed all of the liquid. Garnish with parsley and chives. Serve 4-5 people.

□*I prefer Portuguese sausages to the Spanish chorizo. I find the Spanish chorizo often overwhelms the delicate flavor of the saffron. But if you love Spanish Chorizo, go for it.

**For an extra special depth of flavor, use homemade lobster stock.