

Cooking

Jollof Rice

By Yewande Komolafe

YIELD 8 to 10 servings

TIME 1 1/2 hours

A successful batch of jollof rice requires a few key ingredients (tomatoes, peppers, onions, a few herbs, spices and some stock) and a perfect sauce-to-rice ratio, so the cooked grains remain separate. I have found that the best, no-fuss way to do this is in the oven. Jollof is typically made with long-grain rice, though in Nigeria, parboiled rice is the norm. Most jollof is prepared over an open flame or on a stovetop. Missing from this oven version is the slightly smoky flavor you get from the little bits of rice that have browned on the bottom of your pan, but that's nothing a pinch of smoked paprika can't fix. Serve with braised goat (<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1020284>) or other stewed meats, and a side of fried plantains (<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1020283>).

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE OBE ATA:

1 (14-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes with their juices

1 medium red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and roughly chopped

½ medium red onion, peeled and roughly chopped

4 garlic cloves, peeled

1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped

1 red habanero chile, stemmed

2 tablespoons canola or other neutral oil

FOR THE JOLLOF RICE:

½ cup canola or other neutral oil

2 medium red onions, peeled, halved and thinly sliced

PREPARATION

Step 1

Prepare the obe ata: Working in batches if needed, combine all the obe ata ingredients except the canola oil in a blender and purée on high until smooth. The liquid from the can of tomatoes should suffice, but you can add up to 1/4 cup of water if necessary to get the purée going. (You should have about 3 cups of purée.)

Step 2

Heat the 2 tablespoons canola oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high. Add the purée and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to medium, cover and simmer until the sauce is slightly reduced by about a third of its original volume, 18 to 20 minutes. (It should make about 2 cups. Obe ata can be cooled and refrigerated for up to 2 weeks, or frozen for up to 1 month.)

Step 3

Prepare the rice: Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Heat the 1/2 cup canola oil in a large Dutch oven over medium until shimmering, about 1 minute. Add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove half the onions to a plate and set aside. Add the garlic and sauté until fragrant and translucent, about 2 minutes. Add the tomato paste, turmeric and smoked paprika, if using, and

4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
¼ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional)
3 cups parboiled long-grain rice (such as Carolina Gold or Uncle Ben's Original), basmati or jasmine rice (about 1¼ pounds)
5 fresh thyme sprigs
1 fresh bay leaf
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cups beef, chicken or vegetable stock

toast, stirring occasionally, until turmeric is fragrant and tomato paste has deepened to a dark red color, about 2 minutes.

Step 4

Stir in the obe ata sauce and bring to a simmer over medium heat. The habanero oils love to disperse in the air, so you may want to turn on your stovetop fan or open a window while simmering the obe ata. Stir in the rice, thyme and bay leaf, and season with salt and pepper. Stir in the stock and cover with a lid. Transfer the pot to the oven and cook until rice is just tender, 35 minutes.

Step 5

Remove the pot from the oven and let sit, covered (no peeking) for 15 minutes. Uncover, fluff the rice with a fork and stir in the reserved sautéed onions. Adjust seasoning, if necessary, and discard the thyme sprigs and bay leaf. Serve warm.

PRIVATE NOTES

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