Chicken and Sausage Jambalaya

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

- 1/2-3/4 pound of boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces - 1/2-3/4 pound of andouille sausage, cut into bite-sized pieces (We recommend Savoie’s because it’s easy to find in the metro Atlanta area. But if you can’t find a well-seasoned pork sausage, something smoked will do) - 1 diced white or yellow onion - 2 cups long grain rice - Minced garlic to taste - Cajun seasoning to taste - 2-3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil or vegetable oil - 3 cups of water

Instructions

You’d think a Louisiana girl like me would come out of the womb, just knowing how to make a good jambalaya. But it wasn’t always that way. No one in my family cooked with a recipe, which I believe is par for the course among most people in the state. As a result, you’d get a lot of variation in ingredients, cooking times and technique, depending on the person at the stove. My mother, who has probably cooked the bulk of the jambalayas I’ve eaten, was of the keep it simple school: chicken and/or andouille sausage, a diced onion, some Cajun seasoning and an always-fluctuating amount of long grain rice. She’d throw it all into her skillet and stir and stir until the rice and meat were perfectly browned. Next came the water. Whether she used a coffee cup, highball glass, or Pyrex measuring cup, the rice always cooked through fluffy — never sticky or crunchy, the way some of my early jambalayas turned out – and the meat was juicy and flavorful. At any rate, here is my best stab at telling you how to make what amounts to a savory, satisfying and simple meal. Serve it with a green salad and, if you’re so inclined, ice cold beer, preferably something from Abita. Steps: 1. Coat the bottom of a heated, 12-inch cast-iron skillet with oil. 2. Brown the andouille, then set it aside. 3. Brown the chicken, then set it aside. 4. Add the diced onion, 2 cups of rice and garlic to the skillet, stirring the mixture continuously until the rice is browned, but not burned. This takes at least 20 minutes of elbow grease, so be sure to pour yourself a drink to pass the time. 5. When the rice is browned, add the chicken and andouille back into the

skillet, stirring the mixture until it is well incorporated. 6. Add water to the mixture and stir it well, before adding Cajun seasoning to taste. Many jambalaya chefs add enough seasoning to make the water brown, but I say it’s up to you. 7. After the spice is added (a note on that later), stir the mixture again and bring it to a boil. Once the jambalaya comes up to a boil, turn down the heat to low before covering the skillet for about 15 minutes. 8. Uncover the skillet and stir the mixture again, making sure that the rice isn’t sticking to the bottom of the pot, and adjusting the seasoning as you see fit. Cover the mixture again for another 15 minutes. 9. When the final 15 minutes is up, you should have a zesty dinner with perfectly fluffy, nutty-flavored rice. A note on seasoning: Cajun seasoning is a mix of cayenne, black pepper, white pepper, paprika, salt, thyme, parsley, oregano, onion powder and garlic powder. Brand to brand, these mixtures differ, so I tend to add pinches of the aforementioned ingredients to create a jambalaya that suits my palate. Another note: I have spoken about variation in jambalaya recipes. Sometimes I add bell pepper and green onion at the rice browning stage when I’m in the mood for a hint of sweetness in the dish. Other times I omit chicken and throw in about a pound of shrimp after the andouille and rice are browned.