

Jambalaya

Taken from "Chef Paul Prudhomme's Louisiana Kitchen", my brother Billy has pretty much perfected the recipe!

Seasoning Mix: Combine these ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.

- 2 whole bay leaves
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons ground red pepper (preferably cayenne)
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves
 - 1 1/4 teaspoons white pepper
 - 1 teaspoon black pepper
 - 3/4 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
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- 2 1/2 tablespoon chicken fat or pork lard or beef fat
 - 2/3 cup chopped tasso (preferred) or other smoked ham - about 3 ounces
 - 1/2 cup chopped andouille smoked sausage (preferred) or any other good pure smoked pork sausage such as Polish sausage (about 3 ounces)
 - 1 1/2 cups chopped onions
 - 1 cup chopped celery
 - 3/4 cup chopped green bell peppers
 - 1/2 cup chicken, cut into bite size pieces, about 3 ounces
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic
 - 4 medium-size tomatoes, peeled and chopped, about 1 pound
 - 3/4 cup canned tomato sauce
 - 2 cups Seafood stock or chicken broth
 - 1/2 cups green onions
 - 2 cups uncooked rice
 - 1 1/2 dozen peeled medium shrimp (about 1/2 pound)
 - 1 1/2 dozen oysters in their liquor, about 10 ounces (optional)

In a 4-quart saucepan, melt the fat over medium heat. Add the tasso and andouille and sauté until crisp, about 5 to 8 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the onions, celery and bell peppers; sauté until tender but still firm, about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally and scraping pan bottom well. Add the chicken. Raise heat to high and cook 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Reduce heat to medium. Add the seasoning mix and minced garlic; cook about 3 minutes, stirring constantly and scraping pan bottom as needed. Add the tomatoes and cook until chicken is tender, about 5 to 8 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the tomato sauce; cook 7 minutes, stirring fairly often. Stir in the stock and bring to a boil. Then stir in the green onions and cook about 2 minutes; stirring once or twice.

Add the rice, shrimp and oysters; stir well and remove from heat. Transfer to an ungreased 8x8 inch baking pan. Cover pan snugly with aluminum foil and bake at 350 degrees until rice is tender but still a bit crunchy, about 20 to 30 minutes. Remove bay leaves and serve immediately.

To serve, mold rice in an 8-ounce cup. Place 2 cups on each serving plate for a main course or 1 cup for an appetizer.