

Mujadara Fried Rice

Just lentils, rice, and caramelized onions, *mujadara* is so simple, cheap, and comforting, it's no wonder it's commonly found from home kitchens to street vendors all over the Middle East. Built on pantry staples, it's one of those go-to one-pot dishes you can always turn to when the fridge is bare but it's also accommodating to whatever leftover proteins and vegetables you might want to tuck in. Traditionally, the rice and lentils for *mujadara* are cooked together into a kind of pilaf, but this recipe gives it a fried rice twist. I kept it vegetarian, adding spinach and a lashing of Greek yogurt to make it a more complete meal, but ground beef or lamb sautéed with a little more Middle Eastern Spice Mix (page 52) would be an excellent addition. A tub of fried onions from the Asian market is an easy way to add even more oniony flavor and much-appreciated crunch.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

LENTILS

8 ounces (1 cup) dry green lentils, rinsed and sorted
2 cups broth (vegetable or chicken)
2 cloves garlic, smashed
1 bay leaf

FRIED RICE

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 medium yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced
2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided

3 large cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon Middle Eastern Spice Mix (see page 52)
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground coriander
3 cups cold cooked basmati rice
4 ounces (3 cups) chopped fresh spinach
1 cup store-bought fried onions
1 cup plain whole milk Greek yogurt, or *labneh* (optional)
½ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

- **TO MAKE THE LENTILS:** Combine lentils, broth, garlic, and bay leaf in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce to a bare simmer, and cook until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a colander set in the sink and allow excess liquid to drain. You should have about 2½ cups of lentils.



■ **TO MAKE THE FRIED RICE:** Heat the oil and butter in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. When butter melts, add the sliced onions, season with 1 teaspoon of the salt, and sauté, stirring occasionally, until most are brown around the edges, about 8 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until onions are deep brown and very soft, 10 to 15 more minutes.

■ Add the garlic, increase heat to medium-high, and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the remaining 1 teaspoon salt, along with the spice mix, cumin, and coriander. Add the cold cooked rice and sauté until heated through and completely mixed with the spices and onions. Add the cooked lentils and chopped spinach, and cook until lentils are heated through and spinach is wilted, about 2 minutes.

■ Divide mixture among plates and top with crunchy onions, yogurt, and parsley.

KOSHARI VARIATION: *Koshari* is the national dish of Egypt and almost identical to mujadara except for the addition of macaroni and chickpeas, which add a really fun texture, and the garnish of spicy-tomatoey *shatta* sauce. To make it, add 2 cups of cooked elbow macaroni and 1 cup of drained and rinsed chickpeas along with the lentils. Serve topped with Shatta Sauce (page 52).



Middle Eastern Spice Mix

This blend takes its cue from *advieh*, a Persian spice blend that varies from region to dish to cook. But no matter how many spices people use, *advieh* is always built on cinnamon, cardamom, and cumin. This version adds turmeric for a bit more earthiness and clove for complexity.

MAKES ABOUT ¼ CUP

2 tablespoons ground cumin	2 teaspoons ground cardamom
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 teaspoon ground cloves
2 teaspoons ground turmeric	1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

- Combine ingredients in a small bowl or jar with an airtight lid. Keep in a cool, dry, dark place and try to use within 6 months.

Shatta Sauce

This thick hot sauce is similar to Israeli *zhug* or Moroccan harissa, but the additions of tomato paste, vinegar, and parsley set it apart. I also fry it in a little bit of oil to concentrate its flavors. It's essential for topping *koshari*, the national dish of Egypt (see Koshari Variation, page 96).

MAKES 2 CUPS

1 cup water	2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 cup fresh Italian parsley (packed)	1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup fresh cilantro (packed)	1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste	1 teaspoon ground cumin
6 cloves garlic	1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 large jalapeño pepper (or 2 small), stemmed	2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 serrano pepper, stemmed	

- Puree all ingredients except olive oil in a blender or food processor until relatively smooth. Heat the olive oil in a medium saucepan set over medium heat. Add the puree (be careful; it will splatter), and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes, until flavors meld and sauce has thickened slightly. Remove from the heat and allow to cool. (Sauce will keep refrigerated for several days.)