

How-to Guide: Making Nigerian Jollof Rice



By: Chijioke E. Kamanu

OVERVIEW

Jollof rice is a spicy, traditional dish of West African origin. It is prepared differently to suit the tastes of the various countries that flaunt it as a delicacy; this document outlines the steps of making Nigerian-style Jollof rice. Of course, the recipe can be tweaked to suit individual tastes and preferences but that's entirely at the discretion of the cook.

Although considerable variation exists, the basic profile for Nigerian jollof rice includes long grain parboiled rice, tomatoes and tomato paste, pepper, vegetable oil, onions and stock cubes. Most of the ingredients are cooked in one pot, of which fried tomatoes and pepper puree characteristically form the base. Rice is then added and left to cook in the liquid. The dish is served with the protein of choice and very often with fried plantains, Moi Moi, steamed vegetables, coleslaw, salad, etc.

In the riverine areas of Nigeria where seafood is the main source of protein, seafood often takes the place of chicken or meat as the protein of choice and there are variations of the classic jollof rice; including coconut jollof rice, fisherman jollof rice (made with prawns, periwinkles, crayfish), mixed vegetables jollof rice, and rice and beans. More economically friendly versions of jollof rice are popularly referred to among Nigerians as "concoction rice," the preparation of which can involve as little as rice and pepper.

This how-to guide first serves to create awareness about Jollof rice. The guide proceeds to walk people with varying levels of culinary expertise through the process of transforming a bunch of ingredients into a finished product that is both delicious and nutritious. Upon completion of this document, readers should be able to prepare Jollof rice in a way that incorporates the Nigerian twist. With a basic understanding of this process, readers can proceed to make minor modifications as they deem necessary.

PREPARING YOUR MATERIALS OR INGREDIENTS

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of rice
- 1 Onion
- 1 Red Bell Pepper/Tatashe
- Habanero Peppers
- 500 ml of chopped tomatoes
- 100 g Tomato Purée
- 2 Scotch Bonnet Peppers
- 100 ml of vegetable oil
- Maggi
- Salt
- 1 teaspoon of Curry
- 1 teaspoon of Thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon of Garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon of Ginger
- 2 cups of water or stock

Equipment:

- Blender
- Sharp knives
- Bowls
- Pots
- Frying pan
- Stirring Spoon
- Wooden Spatula

The whole process is expected to take about two hours.

STEPS

1. Blend to get your tomato paste.



Cut the tomatoes, scotch bonnet and red bell peppers into smaller pieces and put them into a blender to obtain tomato paste. Chop your onions and keep them aside.

2. Put your rice into a bowl and soak with hot water. Allow this to soak for 10-15 minutes. Then, wash the rice with warm water and keep it aside, or parboil your rice and wash. This is necessary to get rid of the excess starch in the rice.



3. Put the oil in the pot and allow it to heat up. This will prepare the pan for frying.



4. Add your already chopped onions and allow to fry but be sure to pay enough attention to prevent burning them.



5. Add your blended ingredients and tomato purée, allow to fry, just until you get rid of the sour taste. It typically takes 10 to 15 minutes for the taste to dissipate.



6. Add your Maggi, garlic, ginger, curry, thyme, and salt and mix together. Be careful with your Maggi as you do not want it to be too salty (2 Maggi cubes for a cup of rice). Add your chicken stock or water and mix too. Taste it to adjust to any seasoning. Individual preferences can determine what decisions should be made at this point.



7. Pour your rice into the pot and mix together, making sure it is covered in the tomato sauce.



8. Cook on low medium heat. Check your rice after 10 minutes or more, dip a wooden spatula into it at different points. This helps to get the sauce to the bottom of the pot, preventing it from burning when the rice is not cooked.

9. Cook rice until it's soft. Do not overcook your rice or get it too soggy. When rice is soft, lower the heat and allow to simmer so the water will evaporate completely.



10. Rice is ready. Serve with fried plantain and your choice of meat, if desired. Enjoy your steaming hot plate of Nigerian Jollof Rice.



TIPS

- To make the rice absorb the nutrients and flavor of the boiling tomato paste, add water to the paste and let it boil for a longer period, then add rice.
- Always add chicken or beef stock to your tomato paste for stronger flavor. This also doubles as a good way to economize the stock.
- Add cooked chicken towards the end of the process to prevent it from being overcooked.

- To garnish the rice, cut tomato and onion slices in a neat fashion and add when rice is fully cooked.

GLOSSARY

- Curry – A shrub or small tree native to India and Sri Lanka, the leaves of which are widely used for cooking.
- Maggi – An international brand of seasonings.
- Moi-Moi – Moi-Moi or Moin-Moin is a Nigerian steamed bean pudding made from a mixture of washed and peeled black-eyed peas, onions and fresh ground peppers (usually a combination of bell peppers and chili or Scotch bonnet). It is a protein-rich food that is a staple in Nigeria.
- Parboil – To partly cook, specifically by boiling.
- Thyme – A low-growing aromatic plant of the mint family. The small leaves are used as a culinary herb, and the plant yields a medicinal oil.
- Tatashe – Red Bell Peppers