



LEBANESE LENTILS AND RICE WITH CRISPED ONIONS (MUJADDARA)

50 MINUTES

Rice and lentils with caramelized onions is a much-loved food in the Middle East. This is our take on the version we tasted in Lebanon, where the dish is called mujaddara. The rice and lentils are simmered together in the same pot, with the lentils getting a 10-minute head start so both finish at the same time. Meanwhile, the

onions are fried until crisp and deeply caramelized—almost burnt, really—to coax out a savory bittersweet flavor. Serve hot, warm or at room temperature with a dollop of plain yogurt. It's a delicious accompaniment to grilled or roasted meats, but it's hearty enough to be the center of a vegetarian meal.

Don't use French green lentils (Puy lentils) in place of the brown lentils called for. Even when fully cooked, green lentils retain a firm, almost al dente texture, while brown lentils take on a softness that combines well with the rice. Don't worry if the onions turn quite dark at the edge of the skillet; deep browning is desirable. But do stir the browned bits into the mix to ensure the onions color evenly. However, if the onions brown deeply before they soften, lower the heat a notch or two and keep stirring until the pan cools slightly.

INGREDIENTS

4	MEDIUM GARLIC CLOVES, SMASHED AND PEELED
4	BAY LEAVES
2½	TEASPOONS GROUND CUMIN
½	TEASPOON GROUND ALLSPICE
	KOSHER SALT AND GROUND BLACK PEPPER
1	CUP BROWN LENTILS, RINSED AND DRAINED
1	CUP BASMATI RICE, RINSED AND DRAINED
½	CUP PEANUT OIL
2	MEDIUM YELLOW ONIONS, HALVED AND THINLY SLICED
1	BUNCH SCALLIONS, THINLY SLICED
	PLAIN WHOLE-MILK YOGURT, TO SERVE

DIRECTIONS

In a large Dutch oven over medium-high, combine 5 cups water, the garlic, bay, cumin, allspice, 1 tablespoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Bring to a boil, then stir in the lentils and reduce to medium. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally and adjusting the heat to maintain a simmer, until the lentils are softened but still quite firm at the center, about 10 minutes.

Stir in the rice and return to a simmer. Cover, reduce to medium-low and cook until the liquid is absorbed and the lentils and rice are tender, about 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high, heat the oil until shimmering. Add the onions and cook, stirring only occasionally at the start then more frequently once browning begins at the edges of the pan, until the onions are deeply caramelized and crisped, 10 to 15 minutes; adjust the heat if the onions brown too quickly. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the onions to a paper towel-lined plate and spread evenly. Sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon salt and set aside; the onions will crisp as they cool.

When the lentils and rice are tender, remove the pot from the heat. Uncover and lay a kitchen towel across the pan, then replace the lid and let stand for 10 minutes.

Using a fork, fluff the lentils and rice, removing and discarding the bay. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Stir in half the scallions, then transfer to a serving bowl. Top with the fried onions and remaining scallions. Serve hot, warm or at room temperature with yogurt on the side.