



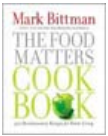
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## Wild Rice with Celery and Steamed Salmon

06|20|11



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By Freya Bellin

Celery truly is underrated. Most people think of it as a mindless addition to salads or soups, but celery actually has its own unique flavor and becomes pleasantly creamy when cooked. This tenderness makes it a great contrast to the grainy, nuttiness of wild rice. You can certainly use water instead of stock for the cooking liquid, but the rice really has a chance to absorb the flavor of the stock, so it goes a long way here.

Steaming the salmon in the same pot as the rice makes this a one-pot meal, and also means that the salmon gets infused with all of the seasonings of the rice, too. I took advantage of a rare opportunity to use a grill and followed the variation for grilled salmon below. Salmon is a great fish for grilling because it stays very moist and cooks super quickly. Just remember that if you're not steaming the salmon, you can add a little less liquid to the pot of rice. Recipe from [The Food Matters Cookbook](#).

### Wild Rice with Celery and Steamed Salmon

Makes: 4 servings

Time: About 1 hour

Common as it is, celery is underappreciated, but it has a wonderful herbaceous flavor when cooked. The hearts are tender and mild and the leaves make a terrific garnish. The idea here is to cook the dish long enough for the celery to melt and the rice to become thick and soft, but if you prefer firmer rice, use a little less liquid and cook for 5 to 10 fewer minutes before adding the salmon.

To gild the lily, stir in some dried cranberries or fresh blueberries or blackberries before adding the fish. (Fruit is also nice if you omit the salmon and serve this as a side dish.)

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1 head celery (about 1 pound)

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, chopped

1 tablespoon minced garlic

1 cup wild rice

3 1/2 cups vegetable or fish stock or water

1 bay leaf

Salt and black pepper

2 thick salmon steaks (about 8 ounces), preferably wild

Lemon wedges

1. Remove the outer stalks from the celery and chop them. Reserve the tender celery heart and its leaves from the center of the head.

2. Put the oil in a deep skillet over medium heat. When it's hot, add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring, until the onion begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the chopped celery and wild rice and continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the rice is fragrant and glossy, just a couple minutes. Stir in the stock, bay leaf, and some salt and pepper and bring to a boil.

3. Adjust the heat so that the mixture bubbles gently, cover, and cook, undisturbed, until the rice is very tender and just beginning to burst, 30 to 40 minutes (or more). At this point there should still be a little liquid at the bottom of the pan (no more than about 1/4 inch); if not, add a little water.

4. Put the salmon on top of the rice, sprinkle with a little salt and pepper, and replace the lid. Steam until the fish is done (a thin knife can be inserted with little resistance), 5 to 10 minutes. Meanwhile, chop the reserved celery heart and leaves. Remove the salmon and cut each steak in half. Fluff the rice with a fork, discard the bay leaf, and taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve the fish on top of the rice, topped with the chopped celery leaves and heart and the lemon wedges.

**Wild Rice with Celery and Grilled or Broiled Salmon.** Ten minutes before the rice is done, prepare a grill or turn on the broiler; the heat should be medium-high and the rack about 4 inches from the fire. Brush the salmon with plenty of olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and grill, turning once, for a total of 5 to 10 minutes. Serve as described in the main recipe.

**Wild Rice with Celery and Pan-Cooked Salmon.** Ten minutes before the rice is done, put a heavy skillet over medium heat for about a minute, then add 2 tablespoons olive oil. Add the salmon to the pan, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and raise the heat to medium-high. Turn the salmon over after 4 minutes, then continue cooking until cooked through, another 3 to 5 minutes (or a minute or 2 less for medium-rare if you prefer). Serve as described in the main recipe.

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