

ARROZ AMARILLO

YELLOW RICE

Virtually all rice consumed in Mexico is stained to be any one of a rainbow of colors: we have red rice, yellow rice, green rice, even black rice. The color imparted to the rice comes from the specific ingredients used: green rice is stained by a mix of fresh herbs; black rice is colored by the cooking liquid from black beans. The yellow rice of Yucatán is colored by staining the cooking fat with *achiote*, a technique also employed in many of our *tamales*. In fact, achiote is often referred to as "the poor man's saffron" since it achieves the same coloring effect and is considerably less expensive and more readily available than saffron. This rice is cooked pilaf style, meaning that the rice is first fried in fat, then is allowed to absorb a flavored stock to finish the cooking.

10 SERVINGS

❧ PREPARE THE VEGETABLES ❧

- **3 Tbs. (45ml) lard**
- **3 tsp. (15ml) achiote seeds**
- **2 cups (440g) long-grain white rice,** rinsed and thoroughly drained
- **1 small red onion, finely chopped**
- **5 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **4 chiles serranos, seeded and thinly sliced**
- **4 cups (1 liter) chicken stock**
- **1 Roma tomato, finely chopped**
- **1 tsp. (5ml) fresh epazote leaves, chopped**

STEP 1 HEAT THE LARD IN A SKILLET UNTIL MELTED. Add the achiote seeds and cook 1-2 minutes or until fat is deeply stained. With a sieve, strain out seeds and return fat to skillet; discard seeds. Add rice to fat and cook over moderate heat, stirring constantly, until rice begins to turn opaque. Add the vegetables to the rice and cook until onions and garlic are translucent.

❧ COOK THE RICE ❧

STEP 2 ADD HALF OF THE STOCK TO RICE MIXTURE. Stir once quickly to incorporate ingredients; bring to a boil then reduce heat. Add tomatoes and *epazote* and stir again briefly to incorporate ingredients. Simmer 5 or 6 minutes until you see air holes appearing on the surface of the rice, signifying most of the moisture has been absorbed. Add the remaining stock, stir quickly and simmer for an additional 5 minutes. Cover with a lid wrapped in a dampened towel. Simmer an additional 5 minutes, then remove from heat. Allow to steep, covered, for 15-20 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed and rice is tender.

❧ SERVE ❧

STEP 3 SCOOP RICE into a 1/2-cup dry measure and pack tightly. Invert over plate and tap bottom. Rice should come out in a neat mound. Top with cilantro sprigs to garnish if desired.

- **Cilantro sprigs, (optional)**