

Prep time 60 minutes

Active prep time 60 minutes

Special equipment needed – large diameter pan and burner

Special skills needed – None

Serves 8

Seafood Paella

Ingredients:

¼ Cup olive oil

1 Chopped large onion

1 Cup chopped celery

1 Chopped red bell pepper

1 Chopped green bell pepper

1 Tbsp fresh thyme

4 Cloves fresh minced garlic

1 tsp saffron – soaked in 2 Tbsp water

1 Bay leaf

1 tsp smoked paprika

2 tsp paprika

1 tsp cumin

Cayenne pepper to taste

6 Tbsp butter

2 ½ Cups rice

4 Cups chicken stock

1 can tomatoes – 15 oz

1 Cup frozen sweet peas

1 lb mussels

1 lb peeled shrimp

½ lb bay scallops

4 small white fish fillets – I prefer striped bass or branzino

2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley

2 lemons cut into slices

Directions:

Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a large diameter, shallow pan. If you have a paella pan, use that, but anything big enough to hold all of the ingredients without getting too deep, will work. You need a very large burner. Your outdoor grill is a good option. If you don't use that, look for a burner big enough to heat the whole bottom of your pan. Add the chopped onion, celery, and both bell peppers and sauté for about 10 minutes until they are softened and well combined. Add the thyme, garlic, saffron, bay leaf, smoked paprika, paprika, cumin, cayenne, and butter. Cook for two minutes, stirring constantly to combine all of the ingredients. Add the rice and stir to coat. Cook it at least a minute to seal the rice.

Add the stock and the tomatoes and bring it to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook uncovered for 15 minutes or until the rice is just a little undercooked. Add water as needed throughout the rest of the cooking process. The rice should be drier than risotto, but not so dry that it starts burning. Gently stir in the sweet peas. This should be the only time you stir the rice. If you must stir, make sure you don't scrape the bottom. That char at the bottom of the pan is what makes it a paella. Add the mussels in a decorative arrangement around the pan. Tuck them in so they get down to the bottom of the pan. Cook for 10 minutes. Add the scallops, fish, and shrimp in a single layer and increase the heat to high. Cook for 5 minutes until the shrimp, scallops, and fish are done and the mussels have all opened. You may have to play with the heat a bit to get the seafood to cook without burning the rice. Blast the heat on high for the last 2 minutes to get the rice to start to smoke on the bottom. If the smoke gets too black or starts to smell burned, reduce the heat. Serve immediately, in the cooking pan garnished with lemon slices and parsley.

A couple notes on this recipe – The recipe calls for slightly less liquid than you probably need, but you can always add more as needed. Do it just a little at a time. The recipe may also come out a bit under salted. I wrote it this way because you can't take salt out. You can always add it at the end. It really depends on how salty your chicken stock is. Finally, the heat at the end requires a little finesse and you may not nail it on the first try. Don't worry about it. As long as you get the seafood cooked to a safe temp (the shrimp turn orange, the fish turn opaque all the way through, the mussels open, the scallops get firm) the rest doesn't matter. You can burn the rice on the bottom badly and it won't ruin the dish, as long as you don't dredge it up from the bottom and stir it into the mix. If you do it perfectly, the rice will form a slightly charred, crispy layer, almost like a chip that you can peel off the bottom of the pan and eat. If you do it poorly, you may spend a bit more time washing the pan. No big deal. Good luck and I hope you enjoy feeling like an international chef this summer.