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Arroz con Pollo

Chicken and Rice

Serves 10

In the 1950s, when poultry was more expensive than either fish or beef, Arroz con Pollo was the preferred dish for special occasions and Sunday family gatherings. It's a one-pot meal that's still perfect for feeding a crowd. Carmen Calzada shared her family's recipe with me.

For the chicken

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium green bell pepper, stemmed, cored, seeded, and cut in rounds

3 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs and drumsticks

For the rice

1 cup dry white wine

4 cups water

One 12-ounce bottle of pilsner-style beer, divided

1/2 pound asparagus, rinsed and trimmed

1 medium yellow onion, grated

1 cup jarred pimientos, drained and sliced

1 cup petit pois or English peas, fresh or frozen

1/4 cup tomato paste

3 large garlic cloves, peeled and mashed to a paste

1 tablespoon kosher salt

1 cube chicken bouillon

3/4 teaspoon freshly ground achiote seeds or Bijol seasoning

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg

3 1/2 cups Valencia or similar short-grain rice, rinsed

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Heat the olive oil over medium-high heat in an ovenproof, 6-quart heavy pot or Dutch oven until hot but not smoking. Add the green pepper to the oil. Working in batches, brown the chicken on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Set aside the browned chicken and repeat with remaining pieces. Remove the green pepper and discard.

To deglaze the pot, add the wine and bring to a simmer, scraping up the browned bits.

Return the browned chicken to the pot. Add the remaining ingredients except for the rice, and half the beer and part of the pimientos to add at the end. Bring to a simmer.

Stir in the rice and simmer over medium-high heat for 10 minutes. Remove the pot from direct heat, cover with a tight-fitting lid, and set in the preheated oven, and bake until the rice is tender but still moist, about 20 minutes.

Remove from the oven and immediately pour in the remaining beer. Garnish with the reserved pimientos.

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