

# Sabahat's Rice Pilaf

**Sidar Tekin**

Dinner is never composed of just a single dish in our household; there will surely be a menu. A main course, a pilaf or pasta on the side, then tzatziki, a salad or fruit. So, pilaf is an essential dish for us. Since it is served with most meals, it has become something quite ordinary as well. Pilaf is therefore for me a dish that is not linked to memories; I don't love it but it's a filling vegan dish, which completes the menu. For this reason, I thought that rice pilaf would be a good example that illustrates our process of collecting vegan and vegetarian recipes.

I asked the questions and my mother answered. Enjoy reading!

**When did you learn this recipe and from whom? Has your recipe changed over time?**

I used to prepare the pilaf with cold water and measured the quantities carefully in the past. I didn't soak the rice in salt water beforehand. Well, my mother used to prepare it that way. My mother used to make a good pilaf, but since Nevin's is better, I cook it like her now. Nevin is my co-in-law. I saw her preparing pilaf with hot water. So, you roast and brown the rice. You add cold water, and you put a spoon in the middle of the rice, if the spoon stands upright then there is enough water; that's what my mother used to say. But this method doesn't always work. My mother didn't put lemon juice in it either. Now I add lemon for the rice to appear whiter. I have been following this new recipe for the past ten years.

**Have you ever cooked rice for my grandmother with this new recipe?**

Yes, I did. But your grandmother doesn't cook anymore and when I am cooking, she doesn't check how I do it. Your grandmother's rice pilaf was also delicious, but I couldn't prepare a good pilaf with her recipe. She was able to, but I wasn't; a question of habit, I suppose.

**When is rice pilaf cooked, is there a special time?**



We always prepare pilaf with almost all meals. Either rice or bulghur. For example, it is prepared when we have green beans or dry beans. It is cooked along with all the dishes made with eggplant. So, we cook it at every meal, both with olive oil vegetable dishes and meat dishes.

**How is pilaf presented, is there a difference?**

Sometimes you can wet a bowl slightly and put the rice in the bowl and serve it upside down. For example, I served it like that to your sister the last time. This is mostly done when you have guests. When we are among family, we don't bother with the presentation.

**For you, what is the trick of the recipe?**

To soak in salted water beforehand and to put lemon juice. Not everyone knows these tricks. Some add sugar also, one teaspoon only.

**So, which of these recipes did you teach your children, how do they prepare it? Is their way similar or different than yours?**

For example, Derya, my oldest daughter, she cooks pilaf in a similar way. But she also says that she doesn't cook a good pilaf. My son prepares it differently. He prepares it without the vermicelli because his kid doesn't like it. Sometimes I don't put vermicelli either. This is the so-called "restaurant style." You directly cook the rice, without browning the vermicelli first. It's like ready-made rice. I don't really know the others in fact, because I don't eat rice prepared by my other children.

**I can come and cook for you. (We laugh)**

Yes, come and cook, I'd be happy to eat your pilaf.

**Is there anything else you want to add?**

*(The answer to this question was a bonus bulgur pilaf recipe. And so, while I came for one pilaf recipe, I left with three pilaf recipes.)*

They prepare bulghur in a different way in Hatay. Few people know this recipe. I learned it from my mother-in-law, my mother doesn't prepare the bulghur like that. You put the bulghur directly in boiling water, then when there is no more water, you brown the vermicelli in oil, olive oil or sunflower oil, then you add that to the bulghur. It's very good, it's delicious when eaten warm. Few people know how to make bulghur that way, throwing directly into boiling water. For example, my mother, she prepared bulghur like rice pilaf. Some add chickpeas too. I also put chickpeas in the rice pilaf. In fact, it depends on the dish you serve your pilaf with. If you have green beans, moussaka, or other eggplant dishes, you add chickpeas to your pilaf. But today I'm not going to put chickpeas, because my grandson doesn't like it.

I also learned about my grandmother's and Nevin's rice pilaf recipes from my mother.

## **My grandmother's recipe**

I rinse my rice. I brown the vermicelli in oil. You can use oil or butter. Then I add the rice in it to brown. It must be in grains; rice shouldn't stick together. I put salt. I use cold water. Then I put the spoon in the middle of the pot, if it stands upright, the amount of water is enough. First, I cook on high heat so that the cold water boils. When it boils, I cook for 15 minutes on low heat. After I turn the heat off, I put a napkin on it and let it rest.

## **Nevin's recipe**

I soak 2 cups of rice in warm salted water for half an hour. I put 3 spoons of sunflower oil and 1 spoon of butter in the pot. I throw the vermicelli before I put on the heat, and then brown them. I wash the rice thoroughly. I rinse the starch and the salt. After browning the vermicelli, I add the rice on low heat, then fry for 5-10 minutes. I add 3 glasses of hot water. I put salt, I eyeball the quantity, maybe as much as a teaspoon. I then let the rice cook without mixing or putting the spoon in it, for 10-15 minutes. I add a few drops of lemon to make it whiter. Once there is no water left, I stir the rice lightly and put a napkin on it and let it rest.