

Paella

SAFFRON RICE WITH SEAFOOD AND CHICKEN

To serve 6:

A 1 ½ - to 2-pound live lobster
6 medium-sized raw shrimps in their shells
6 small hard-shelled clams 6 mussels
3 *chorizos*, or substitute ½ pound other garlic-seasoned smoked pork sausage
A 1 ½ - to 2 pound chicken, cut into 12 serving pieces
2 teaspoons salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup olive oil
2 ounces lean boneless pork, cut into ¼ inch cubes
½ cup finely chopped onions
1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
1 medium-sized sweet red or green pepper, seeded, deribbed and cut into strips 1 1/2 inches long and ¼ inch wide
1 large tomato, peeled, seeded and finely chopped
3 cups raw medium or long-grain regular-milled rice or imported short-grain rice
¼ teaspoon ground saffron or saffron threads pulverized with a mortar and pestle or with the back of a spoon
6 cups boiling water
½ cup fresh peas (½ pound) or substitute ½ cup thoroughly defrosted frozen peas
2 lemons each cut lengthwise into 6 wedges

NOTE: In Spain, a paella may be simple or elaborate. Vary the combination of chicken, meats and shellfish, if you like, to suit your taste. For example, you may omit the lobster altogether or replace it with 6 or 8 additional shrimp. Clams and mussels may be used interchangeably. Add rabbit or let it replace the chicken. Cubed ham, veal, or beef might be used instead of the pork or the sausage. Squid-even snails-are appropriate. Cooked green string beans or artichoke hearts may be added, or substituted for the peas.

With a cleaver or large, heavy knife, chop off the tail section of the lobster at the point where it joins the body and twist or cut off the large claws. Remove and discard the gelatinous sac (stomach) in the head and the long intestinal vein attached to it. Without removing the shell, cut the tail crosswise into 1-inch-thick slices and split the body of the lobster in half lengthwise, then crosswise into quarters. Set aside.

Shell the shrimp, leaving the tails intact. With a small, sharp knife, devein the shrimp by making a shallow incision down their backs and lifting out the intestinal vein with the point of the knife. Scrub the clams and mussels thoroughly with a stiff brush or soapless steel-mesh scouring pad under cold running water and remove the black, ropelike tufts from the mussels. Set the shrimp, clams and mussels aside on separate plates.

Place the sausages in an 8- to 10-inch skillet and prick them in two or three places with the point of a small, sharp knife. Add enough cold water to cover them completely

and bring to a boil over high heat. Then reduce the heat to low and simmer uncovered for 5 minutes. Drain on paper towels and slice them into 14-inch rounds.

Pat the chicken dry with paper towels and season it with 1 teaspoon of the salt and a few grindings of pepper. In a heavy 10- to 12-inch skillet, heat 1 cup of the olive oil over high heat until a light haze forms above it. Add the chicken, skin side down, and brown it well, turning the pieces with tongs and regulating the heat so they color evenly without burning. As the pieces become a rich golden brown, remove them to a plate. Add the lobster to the oil remaining in the skillet. Turning the pieces frequently, cook over high heat for 2 or 3 minutes or until the shell begins to turn pink. Set the lobster aside on a separate plate and add the sausages to the pan. Brown the slices quickly on both sides; then spread them on paper towels to drain.

To make the sofrito, discard all the fat remaining in the skillet and in its place add the remaining cup of olive oil. Heat until a light haze forms above it, add the pork and brown it quickly on all sides over high heat. Add the onions, garlic, pepper strips and tomato. Stirring constantly, cook briskly until most of the liquid in the pan evaporates and the mixture is thick enough to hold its shape lightly in a spoon. Set the sofrito aside.

About a half hour before you plan to serve the paella, preheat the oven to 400°. In a 14-inch paella pan or a skillet or casserole at least 14 inches in diameter and 2- to 2 1/2-inches deep, combine the sofrito, rice, the remaining 1 teaspoon of salt and the saffron. Pour in the boiling water and, stirring constantly; bring to a boil over high heat. Remove the pan from the heat immediately. (Taste the liquid for seasoning and add more salt if necessary.) Arrange the chicken, lobster, sausage, shrimp, clams and mussels on top of the rice and scatter the peas at random over the whole. Set the pan on the floor of the oven and bake uncovered for 25 to 30 minutes or until all the liquid has been absorbed by the rice and the grains are tender but not too soft. At no point should *the paella* be stirred after it goes in the oven.

When the *paella* is done, remove it from the oven and drape a kitchen towel loosely over the top. Let it rest for 5 to 8 minutes. Then garnish the *paella* with the lemons and serve at the table directly from the pan.

OUTDOOR COOKING: In Spain, *paella* is often made out-of-doors on wood fires, but a large charcoal grill serves as well. Following the recipe above, prepare the seafood, chicken, sausages and sofrito at the kitchen stove and have the other ingredients ready for the final assembly outside.

About an hour and a half before you plan to serve the *paella*, light a 2- to 3-inch-thick layer of coals in a charcoal broiler and let them burn until white ash appears on the surface. This may take as long as an hour. Adjust the grill to place it 2' 2- to 3-inches above the coals. If your grill is not absolutely flat on top or tends to tilt, remove it and use a rack from the oven large enough for its four corners to rest on the rim of the grill. In a 14-inch *paella* pan, or a skillet or flameproof baking dish 14 inches in diameter and 2 to 2 1/2 inches deep, combine the *sofrito*, rice, 1 teaspoon of salt and the saffron. Place the pan on the grill, pour in the boiling water, and stir the ingredients thoroughly, spreading the rice evenly over the surface of the pan. Quickly arrange the chicken, sausage and seafood on top, making sure that the clams and mussels are turned with their hinges downward. Scatter the peas over the top and let the *paella* cook briskly, uncovered and

undisturbed, for 15 to 18 minutes, or until all the liquid has been absorbed by the rice. At no point after the *paella* has come to a boil should it be stirred.

When it is done, remove the *paella* from the grill and drape a kitchen towel or a large piece of aluminum foil over the top of the pan. Let the *paella* rest for 5 to 8 minutes, then remove the towel or foil, garnish with lemons and serve directly from the pan. Almost always, because of the intense heat generated by the charcoal, the rice will form a light brown crust on the bottom of the pan. The Spanish prefer it this way and generally serve the crust with the *paella*: however, should the crust char, it is best to leave it clinging to the pan and not serve it with the rest of the rice.