



Pack in protein _ and save the budget _ with beans and rice - Red Beans And Rice -

By: *Melissa d'Arabian* *January 26, 2015*

When I was growing up, beans and rice were an end-of-month staple. As money got tight, my mom would whip up a beans and rice casserole, a healthy, budget-friendly choice that stretched our pantry a bit longer. Not that we necessarily appreciated it. "It's a complete protein!" Mom would proudly announce as my sister and I groaned. But mom was right - beans and rice are a great combination worth another look.

Red beans are a classic choice for this combination, especially in spicy Creole cuisine. Red beans and rice likely became popular because of its nutrition profile. Red kidney beans are full of protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Just a 1/2 cup serving has 8 grams each of protein and fiber - all for about 100 calories, and close to no fat.

Adding rice to the dish completes the amino acids needed to make a complete protein, making beans and rice a fantastic option for vegetarians. In Creole cuisine, the dish is flavored with a bit of meat, either sausage, ham, or just the ham bone leftover from a previous meal.

My version is quick and uses cubed ham to flavor the beans, along with some dried spices and herbs. And while the recipe is simple, the flavors are anything but. Between the ham, chipotle chili powder, cumin, thyme and garlic, you get a whole lot of flavor for not a lot of effort. And with Mardi Gras upon us, it seems like a great time for beans and rice, even if it isn't the end of the month!

RED BEANS AND RICE

Start to finish: 45 minutes *Servings: 8*

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 yellow onion, finely chopped
1 large celery stalk, chopped
1 small red pepper, cored and chopped
6 ounces cooked ham, cubed (about 1 cup)
3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1/2 teaspoon chipotle chili powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 cup dry white wine
3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
Two 15-ounce cans red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
3 cups water
2 cups long-grain white rice
Kosher salt
2 to 3 teaspoons cider vinegar or white vinegar
Ground black pepper
Fresh cilantro or parsley, chopped, to garnish



In a large, heavy saucepan over medium, heat the oil. Add the onion, celery, red pepper and ham and saute until the vegetables are tender and the meat is starting to turn golden, about 7 minutes. Add the garlic, chili powder, cumin and thyme, then cook for an additional 2 minutes.

Increase the heat to medium-high, then add the wine and stir to deglaze the pan. Stir until the wine bubbles and mostly evaporates, about 1 minute. Add the chicken broth and kidney beans, bring to a simmer, then lower the heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan over medium-high, bring the water to a simmer. Add the rice and a pinch of salt, then cover and reduce heat to maintain a simmer. Cook for 15 minutes, or until the water is absorbed and the rice is fluffy.

Once the beans are done, stir in 2 teaspoons of the vinegar. Taste and season with salt, pepper and additional vinegar, if needed. Spoon the rice into serving bowls, then top with the beans and fresh cilantro or parsley.

Nutrition information per serving: 400 calories; 60 calories from fat (15 percent of total calories); 6 g fat (1.5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 10 mg cholesterol; 66 g carbohydrate; 9 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 19 g protein; 590 mg sodium.

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