

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Pans of paella without a paella pan

A few years back, after I made paella for Christmas dinner, my mother offered to buy me a paella pan for next time. I laughed, said thanks, and never did. Oh I would look—in catalogs, the gift store at the Columbia Restaurant in Saint Augustine and even shop windows in Barcelona—but I never made the purchase. It seemed silly to have a single-use item in our crowded kitchen.

I appreciated the offer though. You see, for my mom, me making paella was one of those classic moments in life that are not forgotten. The first time was Father's Day 1971. I used Mom's deep ovenproof skillet for a simple Chicken Paella with peas and little red slices of jarred pimientos. It was part of a seven course meal, I was thirteen and the meal was a gift to my Dad. We started with French Onion Soup and ended with soupy Floating Island, but the paella was fabulous. Of course it didn't hurt that one of my dad's favorite foods was rice!

I've done a lot of cooking, but I don't remember ever making paella again until my parents were here for Boxing Day in 2003. I fussed over the strictly seafood paella bubbling away in two very full cast iron pans. Getting them out of the oven required arms of steel, but it tasted great, Jeff became one of my paella fans, and it was then that my mom offered to buy us a paella pan.

At least a dozen years have passed and our three boys are now men with their own lives. New traditions are formed, so instead of spending Christmas Eve on Shadowlawn Drive (December 2015) we drive with Mom to spend Christmas Eve with our middle son and his family.

As another new tradition, we have picked a different country to celebrate each Christmas Eve. Our son, Zach, and Katie, our daughter-in-law, out-did themselves with the first years of Indian (homemade paneer and empanadas) and Polish food (a six week fermented sauerkraut.) The 2014 holiday was to be Mexican, but the dinner was cancelled due to various illnesses that year.

Christmas 2015 and a desire for simplicity made this year's country Spain and our menu Seafood Paella and Flan. I ordered the seafood (adding a certain someone's favorite, scallops at the last minute) and Katie planned the flan we all love for dessert. A last-minute (and much-loved) guest needed a carb-free dinner, so we planned a second paella, rice-free.

So it finally happened, on December 23rd I bought two 12-inch stainless steel paella pans. On Christmas Eve, Katie and I stood side by side facing the stove. The paella was beautiful and tasted even better than it looked. It was so much fun—the kids even helped—that we may make it our newest tradition. That way the long-awaited pans will get used at least once a year.

What's Fresh Right Now?

- Bananas
- Beets
- Bitter melon
- Bok Choy
- Broccoli
- Cabbage—green, napa, cone
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Chestnuts
- Citrus—orange, grapefruit, tangerine, lemon, kumquat, calamondin, tangelo
- Cucumbers—mini seedless, slicers
- Fennel
- Ginger, Galangal, Tumeric
- Greens—chard, kale, mustard, arugula, wild arugula, mizuna, collards, sorrel, moringa **with roots**—turnips, rutabaga
- Herbs—mint, italian/purple/lemon/thai and holy basil, thyme, sage, oregano, rosemary, stevia, curry leaf
- Honey
- Kohlrabi
- Lettuce—romaine, red/green leaf, spring mix
- Mushrooms—shiitake, chanterelle
- Onions—green, yellow/white/red
- Papaya
- Peppers—red/green/yellow/orange sweet, habanero, jalapeno, poblano, variety sweet and hot
- Potatoes—sweet
- Radish—daikon, globe, french breakfast
- Shoots, Sprouts and Microgreens
- Squash—zucchini, butternut, seminole pumpkin, yellow
- Tomatoes—grape, sun-gold, cluster, heirloom, plum, green

Local and Fresh— Broccoli

Green heads from the new crop of broccoli are popping up at all our farmers markets. Look for evenly-colored deep green florets with tightly packed buds. To avoid peeling stems choose thin stalks with tender skins. Cook quickly and lightly to avoid a sulphur smell.

Broccoli Three Cheese Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 1 shallot, quartered lengthwise and sliced
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 1 small potato, diced
- 4 cups broth
- 4 cups cooked broccoli, chopped very finely
- 2 ounces cheddar (1/2 cup shredded)
- 1 ounce parmesan (1/4 cup shredded)
- 2 Tablespoons whole wheat flour
- 1 ounce cream cheese or mild chevre
- 2 cups milk
- pinch each salt, nutmeg and cayenne pepper
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Stir shallot in deep pot over medium heat until fragrant. Stir in butter and potato and sauté 4 minutes.

Pour in broth and bring to boil. Cover and reduce heat to simmer. Cook 10 minutes.

Uncover and stir in broccoli. Return to full simmer, cover and cook another 10 minutes.

Mix flour into shredded cheese and stir into soup with cream cheese and milk. Cover and heat, stirring occasionally, until thickened and cheese is melted. Stir in spices and lemon juice.

Serve hot. Refrigerate leftovers.

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Seafood Paella

INGREDIENTS

- ½ teaspoon saffron
- 4 cups seafood stock
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced into half rounds
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 1 small fennel bulb, sliced lengthwise
- 2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed and chopped
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon smoked sweet paprika
- ½ pound bay scallops
- 1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined, 21-25 count
- 1 cup sliced artichoke hearts, defrosted since frozen is preferable to canned
- 1/2 tablespoon salt
- 1 whole bay leaf
- 2 cups paella rice (Bomba variety) or risotto rice (Arborio) or other short round rice variety
- 1 cup peas, defrosted since frozen is preferable to canned
- 16 clams in shell
- 16 mussels
- Garnish - roasted asparagus, lemon wedges, parsley, a sprinkle of dry white wine (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Use a mortar and pestle to pulverize the saffron into a powder. In a small saucepan, heat seafood stock and add saffron. Stir until saffron dissolves. Keep warm until needed.

Warm oil in a 12 inch paella pan over medium heat. Sauté onion, shallot and fennel until tender. Stir in tomatoes and garlic with oregano and paprika and sauté 3 minutes.

Add the scallops, shrimp and artichoke hearts. Sauté for 1 minute.

Stir in saffron stock, salt, bay leaf, rice and peas. As mixture comes to a boil, stand clams and mussels up in rice mixture, spacing them evenly.

Cover with heavy duty foil and bake at 400 degrees for approximately 20-30 minutes or until rice is done and clams are completely open.

If using wine, sprinkle on while paella is hot. Garnish as desired. Serve hot.

To store leftovers, remove seafood from shells, cover and refrigerate.

Tricks and Tips

Making paella, whether on the stovetop, in the oven, or on the grill, requires a large, flat pan so that the rice will cook evenly and quickly. Steel pans are traditional, but require special care. Stainless steel conducts heat well and cleans up easily. Very large cast iron skillets will also work perfectly, but check your stove since some flat top ranges can't handle the weight.

Seafood Paella Paleo-Style

Use the recipe for **Seafood Paella**.

Omit onion, 1 tomato, peas and rice.

Use only two cups of saffron broth.

Cover with foil and cook as directed.

Serve garnished with parsley.

If a rice substitute is desired, grate 2 cups of raw cauliflower and add with broth to seafood mixture.



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Roasted Pears

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pears, peeled/sliced
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 1 Tablespoon honey
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

In an ovenproof dish, place pears in one layer and dot with butter. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Drizzle with honey and lemon juice. Bake an additional 30 minutes. Pears will be very soft and may be served as is or mashed into a sauce.

Three Ginger Gingerbread

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup molasses
- 1/4 cup oil
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 Tablespoon each fresh ginger and crystallized ginger, chopped very finely
- 1 1/4 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon dried ground ginger
- 1/4 cup hot water

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly grease an 8x8 square pan or 9 inch round pan. Beat together wet ingredients—not the hot water. Add chopped gingers. In a separate bowl, stir together the dry ingredients. Pour dry ingredients into wet, blending thoroughly. Stir in hot water. This is a very thin batter. Pour into prepared pan and bake 30-40 minutes until firm to the touch with browned edges. Cool 10 minutes before cutting. Serve warm with Roasted Pears. Cover leftovers to store.

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