

Rice with green beans and meatballs (loobiya polo)

Prep time 5 minutes
Cooking time 30-40 minutes
serves 4 people

Ingredients

400g (2 cups) Basmati rice
200g (2 cups) trimmed green beans
200g (7oz) store-bought meatballs of your choice- beef, pork, lamb or mixed
1 large onion, finely chopped
45g (3 tbsp) tomato paste
120ml (8 tbsp) vegetable oil
salt and pepper
optionally, a generous sprinkle of cinnamon and ground dried rose petals

To prepare the rice

Soak the rice in a pot containing hot water and 2 heaped tablespoons of salt. Cover and set aside to soften. This will considerably reduce the cooking time.

To make the sauce

Heat some oil in a large frying pan. Add the chopped onion and fry for 3 minutes or so. Add the trimmed green beans to the pan and fry for 2 minutes. They need to still be crunchy; they will cook through when mixed with the rice. Add the meatballs (if you are using any) to the pan and fry them lightly. When they turn a light brown colour, add the tomato paste and season with salt, pepper, and turmeric if desired. Set aside.

Bring a litre of water to a boil in a large saucepan; make sure it is big enough to contain the rice, which will double in volume when cooked. After 10 minutes, transfer the soaked rice into the boiling water and cook only until the rice grains are half-cooked. To be sure, press a rice grain between two fingers; it should be soft on the outside but hard in the middle. Strain the rice.

Heat some oil in the saucepan you cooked the rice in. When the oil is piping hot, add one-third of the rice into the bottom of the saucepan, spreading it evenly. If desired, sprinkle ground cinnamon and ground dried rose petals evenly on top of the rice. Spoon a third of the sauce over the rice and repeat the layers until you run out of each, making sure to save enough rice for the top layer. Pour a little bit of water around the edge of the pot, reduce to a medium heat and cover. When steam starts to seep from beneath the lid, spoon a generous knob of butter on top of the rice. Cover and lower the heat. Cook for another 15 minutes.

