

Chicken and Rice (Gaina con Aroz)

No Friday night dinner or Saturday lunch went by without the traditional chicken and rice. They were cooked together in a savory stock that had been flavored with the traditional soup vegetables and accented with cinnamon and grated lemon rind to create a subtle, most agreeable blend of tastes. In winter we had it accompanied by beetroot salad or pickles, in summer by grilled peppers.

2 tablespoons light vegetable oil
6–8 pieces chicken
1 onion, peeled and whole
1 carrot, whole
1 bay leaf
1 stalk celery, with leaves
3 sprigs parsley

1 cup water
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
1½ cups rice
grated rind of ½ lemon
½ teaspoon cinnamon
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Your cooking pot should be large enough to hold both chicken and finished rice.

In a large, lidded skillet or flameproof casserole, heat the oil and saute the chicken parts lightly on all sides. Add onion, carrot, bay leaf, celery stalk and parsley. Pour in 1 cup of water and the salt and pepper, cover and cook on a low heat for 20 minutes.

Remove the chicken from the pan, strain the stock, measure it and add enough water to make 2½ cups liquid. Reserve.

Replace the chicken pieces in the pan. Sprinkle in the rice, the grated lemon peel and the cinnamon, and pour the chicken stock over it all. Cover, bring to a boil, lower the heat and cook slowly until all water is absorbed and the rice is cooked, about 15 minutes. Uncover, add another grinding of fresh pepper, sprinkle with fresh parsley and cover the pan with a clean towel. Allow to stand for 15 minutes before serving. Serve with pickled vegetables.

Serves 6–8.