

Basic Fried Rice

Just about anything can go into fried rice: fresh or frozen vegetables, leftover roast chicken, grilled steak, ham, tofu, etc. To start from scratch with a protein, just season thinly sliced chicken breast, peeled shrimp, or tofu cubes in some soy sauce and sauté until almost cooked, then set it aside.

Start with leftover cooked rice that's been refrigerated overnight. Cold rice is firmer, making it easier to separate and decreasing the probability of mushy fried rice. Use medium- to long-grain rice. Short-grain rice tends to be softer and to stick together.

Two to three cups should be enough to feed two people. Break up any large clumps and separate the grains with wet fingers.

A blazing hot wok and an adequate amount of oil will ensure your ingredients don't stick to the surface.

Use the biggest pan available in your kitchen and don't crowd it with ingredients.

Here's how to make fried rice in 5 steps:

1. Preheat a 14-inch wok, or the largest pan you own, over high heat for about 1 minute. Swirl in about 2 T. of oil and heat it until it shimmers. Reduce the heat to medium and add some minced garlic and chopped onion, then stir until fragrant.
2. Have ready 3-4 cups total vegetables, chopped into bite-sized pieces. Add them in order of how long they will take to cook. Harder vegetables such as roots and broccoli take the longest and should be added first. Separate greens from thick stems of pac choi or yukina savoy. Greens should go in last. Cook until all vegetables are tender, about 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Add the cooked protein and stir fry for a minute or so to let it crisp up.
4. Move all the ingredients to one side of the wok. Crack 2 eggs into the middle, letting them sit for a minute or so until they begin to set. Then, stir to scramble them until they are almost cooked through, but still a little soggy.
5. Add the rice, stirring and tossing between each addition. Use your spatula to break up any clumps. Add a few tablespoons of your chosen sauce (tamari, oyster sauce, bottled teriyaki sauce, chili paste, etc.), plus salt and freshly ground black or white pepper to taste. Don't add too much sauce or things will get mushy. Add dash or two of toasted sesame oil, if desired.

Stir everything swiftly around the wok until the rice is heated through, well-coated, and well-colored (little bits of white here and there are okay). Add more oil if the rice begins to stick to the wok; reduce the heat if it starts to scorch. Taste and adjust seasonings if necessary, then divide the rice among dinner plates. Serve immediately and enjoy!

(Adapted from food52.com)