



PERFECT PILAF. A serving of Greek-style rice pilaf is seen with chicken in New York. Born as a side dish, Greek-Style Rice Pilaf easily converts to main-dish status. Just top it off with a little sautéed shrimp or chicken and call it a meal. (Sara Moulton via AP)

Basmati rice makes Greek-Style Rice Pilaf special

By Sara Moulton
The Associated Press

With the exception of ooey-goey potato concoctions, side dishes rarely get any respect. Most of us devote our love and attention to the protein in the center of the plate and then throw together some kind of vegetable and/or starch as an afterthought. Here, however, is a pilaf fully capable of stealing the limelight from the usual star of the show.

It's basmati rice that makes Greek-Style Rice Pilaf so special. An especially aromatic grain used for centuries in India and Pakistan, basmati doesn't usually show up in a Greek-styled pilaf. But I prefer its naturally nutty taste to the blandness of the usual varieties of long-grain rice. (There's a reason basmati means fragrant in Hindi.) The seasonings, of course, are also key: sautéed spinach spiked with red pepper flakes, feta cheese, olives, and dill.

To make sure the cooked grains end up separate and fluffy — and to wash away excess starch — I started by rinsing the rice. This requires covering the rice in several inches of cold water, stirring it in a

circular motion several times, dumping off the water, and starting again with fresh water. Repeat this process as often as it takes for the water to become almost clear.

Cooking rice also requires some care. It needs to be tightly sealed and cooked at a bare simmer to achieve the right texture. Place a wet paper towel under the lid to ensure that no liquid can escape. Waiting 10 minutes after it's cooked before fluffing it up allows all the moisture to be absorbed.

If you're not a fan of feta, just swap in ricotta salata, a kind of aged ricotta. You're also welcome to lose the dill in favor of oregano, basil, or mint. And if you don't like olives, just leave them out. Finally, if you'd prefer a vegetarian version of this dish, reach for vegetable broth instead of chicken broth.

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Editor's note: Sara Moulton is host of public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals." She was executive chef at Gourmet magazine for nearly 25 years and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows, including "Cooking Live." Her latest cookbook is Home Cooking 101.

Greek-Style Rice Pilaf

Start to finish: 1 hour (30 minutes active)

Servings: 6

- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 cup basmati rice, rinsed until the water runs clear when drained
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 2/3 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 8 ounces baby spinach
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 ounces finely crumbled feta cheese (about 1/2 cup)
- 1 ounce chopped Mediterranean olives (heaping 1/4 cup)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

In a medium saucepan, cook the onion in two tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally until it is golden, about eight minutes. Add the rice and garlic; cook, stirring, for three minutes. Add the lemon zest and chicken broth and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat to medium-low, adjusting the temperature to make sure the broth maintains a bare simmer. Cover the top of the pot with a wet paper towel and a tight-fitting lid and cook, without stirring, for 17 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand for 10 minutes.

While the rice is simmering, cook the spinach. In a large skillet, heat one tablespoon of the remaining oil over high heat, add half the spinach, and cook, stirring until it is wilted. Add half the pepper flakes, then stir and transfer the spinach to a bowl. Repeat the procedure with the remaining oil, spinach, and pepper flakes and set aside.

When the rice is done and has rested for 10 minutes, add the feta, olives, and dill and, using a fork, fluff the rice to separate the grains. Serve right away.

Nutrition information per serving: 259 calories (110 calories from fat); 12 g fat (3 g saturated, 0 g trans fats); 8 mg cholesterol; 211 mg sodium; 30 g carbohydrates; 1 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 6 g protein.

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Taiwanese crime thriller claims three top Golden Horse awards

By Johnson Lai
The Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Taiwanese crime thriller *The Bold, The Corrupt, The Beautiful* claimed three top Golden Horse movie awards, including best feature film.

Veteran Hong Kong actress Kara Wei said on stage that her best actress win for the film fulfilled a wish. Her co-star, 14-year-old Vicky Chen, became the youngest best supporting actress winner for her role in the film by Taiwanese director Yang Ya-che.

China's Vivian Qu won the best director award for the dark drama *Angels Wear White*, which addresses the theme of child sexual assault.

"I am really happy, because this movie talks about social problems. And I think nothing is more important than (that) this movie reaches its audiences," she said in accepting the award at the ceremony.

China's Tu Men credited luck for being named best leading actor for his role as a bankrupt businessman in the film *Old Beast*.

Five Golden Horse awards, the Chinese-language equivalent of the Oscars, went to the black comedy, *The Great Buddha*. Taiwanese director Huang Hsin-yao was named best new director and the film was also honored for best adapted screenplay,

Sumo wrestler Harumafuji retires over assault allegations

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claims against a yokozuna grand champion, whose behavior in sports and society is expected to be exemplary.

Harumafuji was accompanied by his stablemaster, Isegahama, who made a tearful apology and said Harumafuji, as a yokozuna — the highest level in sumo — must accept the consequences of actions.

Harumafuji allegedly struck compatriot Takanoiwa with his palms, fists, and a karaoke machine remote control at a drinking party in late October, fracturing his skull and causing other injuries.

"As a senior wrestler, I felt it was my responsibility to teach him the proper behavior," Harumafuji said of the encounter in October.

The 33-year-old Harumafuji reportedly became aggravated when Takanoiwa repeatedly checked his mobile phone while



BEST LEADING ACTRESS. Hong Kong actress Kara Wei holds her award for best leading actress and poses for media at the 54th Golden Horse Awards in Taipei, Taiwan. Wai won for the film *The Bold, The Corrupt, The Beautiful* at this year's awards, the Chinese-language equivalent of the Oscars. (AP Photo/Billy Dai)

best cinematography, best original film score, and best original film song.

The black-and-white film about two people who discover their boss's dark secret from a car dashboard camera's footage shows the struggles of the underclass and exposes political corruption.

the two were conversing.

The Japan Sumo Association (JSA), which imposes strict rules on wrestlers, is conducting an investigation, but Harumafuji decided to retire ahead of the probe.

Born Davaanyam Byambadorj, Harumafuji debuted in 2001 and has won the championship nine times, with his most recent victory at the autumn tournament in September. He was promoted to yokozuna in 2012.

Harumafuji's retirement is the latest scandal to rock the sumo world.

In 2011, the JSA decided to cancel the Spring Grand Sumo Tournament after revelations that 14 wrestlers were involved with match-fixing.

In 2010, grand champion Asashoryu, also of Mongolia, announced his retirement following reports that he injured a man while intoxicated.



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