

MRIDULA'S ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS

Saffron infused basmati rice “saffron pilau “ - (Serves 4)

Saffron infused basmati rice is perfect for a festive table or any special occasion meal. Team i Basmati is a very special long grain rice and it needs special treatment. Do follow my golden rules for cooking a beautiful pot of basmati rice.

INGREDIENTS

225g basmati rice
Good pinch of saffron strands, pounded
2 tablespoons hot milk
2 tablespoons ghee or unsalted butter
4 green cardamom pods, bruised
2.5cm piece cinnamon stick
2 star anise
2 bay leaves
Salt or to taste
450ml hot water

METHOD

Wash the rice in several changes of water until the water runs clear and soak it in cold water for 20 minutes.

Soak the pounded saffron in the hot milk and set aside.

In a heavy based saucepan, melt the ghee or butter gently over a low heat and add the cardamom, cinnamon, star anise and bay leaves. Allow them to sizzle for 15-20 seconds or until the cardamom pods have puffed up.

Drain the rice and add to the spiced butter. Add the salt and stir until the grains are coated with the spiced butter. Pour in the hot water and bring to the boil. Let it boil steadily for about a minute and reduce the heat to low, cover the pan and cook for 7-8 minutes. Remove from the heat and quickly sprinkle the saffron infused milk over the top, then cover the pan again and let it stand for 10-15 minutes.

Fluff up the rice with a fork, and using a metal spoon transfer to a serving dish.

Cook's Notes:

Golden rules for cooking basmati rice in order to enhance the slender grains are:

1) Wash well in order to remove the first layers of milling starch 2) soak for 20 minutes to remove further traces of milling starch, 3) Do not lift the lid during cooking, 4) Once cooked, leave it to rest for 10-15 minutes with the lid on 5) use a metal spoon to serve as wooden ones will squash the delicate grains. You can now smile at your beautifully fluffy, dry, slender and separate grains!