

## Kosheri

(from a recipe in the *Ottolenghi* cookbook)

- 300g green or brown lentils
- 200g basmati rice
- 40g unsalted butter
- 50g fine vermicelli or egg noodles, broken into 4 cm pieces
- 400 - 500ml water\*
- ½ teaspoon grated nutmeg
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- several grinds of black pepper
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced



\* The original recipe specifies 400ml water, but I found that I needed 500ml to cook my Basmati rice (apparently it varies enormously from region to region). Check your rice halfway through the cooking process, and if it looks like the liquid has been completely absorbed, add a little more.

1. Pick over the lentils well, removing any debris, then wash in a sieve under cold running water. Place in a large saucepan and cover with lots of cold water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the lentils are tender but not mushy (about 20 minutes). Alternatively, you could use drained and rinsed tinned lentils.

2. Rinse the rice well in a sieve under running water and leave to drain. In a large saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat and then add the uncooked vermicelli and fry until it turns golden brown. Add the drained rice and stir well to coat with the butter.

*Original instructions at this point* are to add the water, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt and pepper to the pan. Bring to the boil, cover and then reduce the heat to a minimum and simmer for 12 minutes. Turn off the heat, remove the lid and cover the pan with a clean teatowel before replacing the lid and allowing the rice to sit for a further five minutes.

*What I did* was transfer the fried rice and vermicelli to a microwave-proof container, added the water and spices and cooked the rice in my microwave for 5 minutes on high, and then 16 minutes on medium (timing will vary depending on your microwave). *Alternatively*, I think that you should be able to put everything into an electric rice cooker, adjusting the amount of liquid if necessary and cooking the rice in there.

3. While the rice is cooking, heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and sauté the onions over a medium heat until they turn a dark brown. Drain them on a kitchen towel.

4. Once the rice is cooked, stir in the lentils and most of the onions, reserving a few for decoration. Adjust for seasoning if required.

*Addendum:* I started writing this post a couple of weeks ago, and since then I've made this dish again. Second time around I cooked it on the stove as instructed, using egg noodles and two x 400g tins of lentils (rinsed and well drained). I needed at least 500ml water, and figured out that the most important part of the dish is the fried onions - don't skimp on them!

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