

Jambalaya

For the Sauce

1 large red onion, chopped
2 large red peppers, diced
2 celery stalks, diced
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 28-oz. can crushed tomatoes
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
1 cup water
2 teaspoons fresh or dried thyme
2 teaspoons fresh or dried oregano
Large pinch cayenne
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
3 tablespoons minced parsley
Black pepper to taste
Olive oil

For the Meats

¼ pound slab or thick-sliced bacon
½ pound chunk smoked baked ham
12 ounces Andouille sausage
1 pound large shrimp
1 whole boneless, skinless chicken breast
Olive oil

For the Pilaf

1½ cups long-grain rice
1 large shallot, minced
¼ cup olive oil
3 cups chicken broth
1 bay leaf
3 parsley sprigs
4 thyme sprigs

In a 1-quart bowl filled with cold water, dissolve 1½ tablespoons each of sugar and salt. Cut the whole chicken breast in halves and submerge them in the brining liquid. Cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

Cut the bacon into small lardons or cubes. In a large Dutch oven, lightly brown the bacon in a tablespoon of olive oil. Remove from the casserole with a slotted spoon. Cube the smoked ham and sauté until lightly browned. Remove with a slotted spoon. You may need to add olive oil through this browning process. Cut the Andouille sausage into ½-inch rounds and brown lightly. Remove from casserole. Peel and devein the shrimp. Sauté in the casserole, just until they turn pink all over. Remove to a separate plate from the other meats.

In the Dutch oven, sauté the celery until it just begins to soften. Remove with a slotted spoon. Add more olive oil through this process, only if necessary. Sauté the red pepper just until it begins to soften. Remove with a slotted spoon. Sauté the red onion until it has softened, then add the minced garlic and cook for another minute.

Return the cooked celery and red pepper to the casserole with the onions and garlic. Add the crushed tomatoes, the tomato sauce, and about 1 cup of water. Add the thyme, oregano, cayenne, cumin, Worcestershire sauce, and black pepper to taste. Add the cooked bacon, ham, and Andouille to the sauce, and simmer for at least ½ hour, stirring frequently. Correct seasoning.

The Pilaf

In a saucepan, bring the chicken stock to the boil. Meanwhile, in a heavy ovenproof 2-quart casserole, gently sauté the minced shallot in the olive oil until very soft. Add the rice,

stirring over medium-high heat until the rice is toasted and somewhat translucent, about 3 minutes. Pour on the boiling chicken stock and stir in the bay leaf, parsley and thyme sprigs. Cover the casserole and place in a 350° oven for about 15 minutes until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed. Remove the herbs and bay leaf, which have floated to the top of the rice. Then stir the rice into the tomato mixture, continuing to simmer gently.

The Chicken

Remove the chicken-breast halves from the brine, and dry thoroughly on paper towels. Lightly oil a broiling pan and brush the chicken breasts with olive oil. Place under a hot broiler, about 6-inches from the flame. Broil for about 5-6 minutes per side until they develop brown spots. Remove from the broiler as soon as the breasts are no longer pink when you cut into the thickest part of them.

Slice the breasts about ¼ inches thick. Add the slices to the tomato and meat mixture, and pour in any exuded juices into the casserole.

Finishing the Jambalaya

If the tomato and meat mixture seems too dry, add a little more water or chicken broth. Just before serving, add the sautéed shrimp to the casserole and heat through. Taste again for seasoning. Sprinkle the chopped parsley over the top and serve directly from the casserole.