

MARICEL SANTOS

At Maricel's Table



FILIPINO HOME COOKING
120 recipes. A little taste of home.

Welcome to my table



Kain na. Let's eat.

I am Maricel Santos, a Filipino-American home cook. I moved to the United States from the Philippines as a child, and the cooking I learned from my mother and relatives stayed with me. This book brings that generous spirit to your kitchen.

A place to begin

Start with rice and one dish you are excited to cook. Learn the smell of garlic just turning golden, taste a sauce before reducing it further, and let the food tell you when it is ready. There is room at this table for both familiar favorites and first attempts.

Steamed Jasmine Rice

A good pot of rice belongs at the center of the table. This covered-pot method gives you separate, tender grains with very little fuss.

4 servings | Prep 5 minutes | Cook 18 minutes

Rest / advance time: 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 cups (370 g) jasmine rice

2 1/2 cups (600 ml) water

METHOD

1. Put the rice in a bowl, cover with cool water, swirl and drain. Repeat twice; the water need not run perfectly clear.
2. Put drained rice and measured water in a heavy saucepan with a tight lid. Bring to a gentle boil over medium-high heat.
3. Stir once, cover and reduce to the lowest heat. Cook for 15-18 minutes, until the water is absorbed. Do not keep lifting the lid.
4. Remove from the heat and leave covered for 10 minutes. Fluff gently with a fork or rice paddle.



Steamed Jasmine Rice



The right pot: A heavy bottom limits scorching. Use a saucepan large enough for the rice to expand to about three times its dry volume.

Read the grain: Different brands and older rice may need a little more water. If the grains remain firm after resting, sprinkle in 2 tablespoons hot water and steam, covered, for 3 minutes.

At the table: Serve with adobo, tinola or almost any saucy dish. Plain rice balances salty and sour flavors without competing with them.

Save safely: Transfer leftovers promptly into shallow containers and refrigerate within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Reheat to 165°F/74°C.

Chicken Arroz Caldo

Ginger, chicken and rice cook into a comforting porridge. A little calamansi at the table brightens every spoonful.

6 servings | Prep 20 minutes | Cook 50 minutes

Rest / advance time: None

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil
 1 small onion, diced
 5 garlic cloves, minced
 2-inch (5 cm) piece ginger, peeled and julienned
 1 1/2 lb (680 g) boneless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces
 1 cup (185 g) jasmine rice, rinsed
 7 cups (1.7 liters) unsalted chicken stock, plus hot water as needed
 2 tablespoons (30 ml) fish sauce
 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
 3 hard-cooked eggs, halved
 2 scallions, sliced
 6 calamansi or lemon wedges

METHOD

1. Heat oil in a large pot. Cook onion for 4 minutes. Add garlic and ginger; stir for 1 minute.
2. Add chicken and cook for 5 minutes, stirring. Add rice and stir for 1 minute.
3. Pour in stock and fish sauce. Bring to a boil, then simmer partially covered for 35-40 minutes, stirring often as the rice thickens. Chicken must reach 165°F/74°C.
4. Add pepper and enough hot water to make a loose, spoonable porridge. Serve with eggs, scallions and citrus.



Chicken Arroz Caldo



Texture cue: The grains should be soft and beginning to break apart. Stir along the bottom of the pot to prevent sticking.

Adjust at the end: Fish sauce brands vary in saltiness. Taste after the rice has cooked before adding more.

For a gentler bowl: Cut ginger into large slices and remove them before serving if you prefer its flavor without the little strips.

Next-day bowls: Porridge thickens in the refrigerator. Add a splash of water while reheating and stir until it reaches 165°F/74°C.

Champorado

Chocolate rice porridge is warm, simple and deeply comforting. This cocoa version uses ingredients that are easy to find in a US grocery store.

4 servings | Prep 5 minutes | Cook 30 minutes

Rest / advance time: None

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (200 g) glutinous rice, rinsed
4 cups (960 ml) water, plus more as needed
1/3 cup (30 g) unsweetened cocoa powder
1/3 cup (65 g) granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon fine salt
1/2 cup (120 ml) evaporated milk, to serve

METHOD

1. Combine rice and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring frequently.
2. Whisk cocoa with a few spoonfuls of hot cooking liquid in a small bowl until smooth. Stir the mixture into the rice with sugar and salt.
3. Simmer 5-10 minutes more until the grains are fully tender. Add water a little at a time if too thick.
4. Divide among bowls and drizzle with evaporated milk. Serve warm.



Champorado



Choose the rice: Glutinous rice is also called sticky or sweet rice. Its starch makes the porridge creamy; it is different from jasmine rice.

No cocoa lumps: Mixing the powder into a paste before adding it to the pot makes a smoother bowl.

Set the sweetness: Start with the measured sugar. Cocoa varies in bitterness, so taste before making a small adjustment.

Serving tradition: Some households pair champorado with salty dried fish. A small salty side gives contrast, but the porridge is satisfying on its own.

Chicken Adobo

Soy sauce, vinegar, garlic and bay leaves become a deeply savory sauce with very little effort. Let the chicken simmer gently, then reduce the sauce to your liking.

4 servings | Prep 15 minutes | Cook 45 minutes

Rest / advance time: None

INGREDIENTS

2 lb (900 g) bone-in chicken thighs
1 tablespoon (15 ml) neutral oil
8 garlic cloves, crushed
1/3 cup (80 ml) soy sauce
1/3 cup (80 ml) cane vinegar
3/4 cup (180 ml) water
3 dried bay leaves
1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

METHOD

1. Pat chicken dry. Heat oil in a wide pot over medium-high heat; brown chicken in batches, 3-4 minutes per side.
2. Return all chicken to the pot. Add garlic, soy sauce, vinegar, water, bay leaves and peppercorns. Bring to a boil.
3. Cover loosely and simmer over low heat for 25-30 minutes, turning once, until chicken is tender and reaches 165°F/74°C.
4. Uncover and simmer 5-10 minutes to reduce the sauce. Remove bay leaves and serve, warning diners about whole peppercorns.

Chicken Adobo



Taste the sauce with rice: On its own, adobo sauce can seem strong. A spoonful over plain rice gives a better sense of its balance.

Control the reduction: Stop while there is still enough sauce to spoon over each serving. If it becomes too salty, add a splash of water.

Brown in batches: Surface color gives depth, but the chicken finishes cooking in the simmering liquid. It does not need to cook through during browning.

A family of dishes: Adobo varies from kitchen to kitchen. This soy-based version is one useful starting point rather than a single definitive formula.