



#### WHY WE... ★ TOAST RICE

Toasting the grains until they're coated in oil and start to look translucent helps them separate so they won't clump. (It adds flavor, too.)

#### BUILD A BETTER...PILAF

## The Nicest Rice

Turmeric or cinnamon? Nuts or raisins? The players may change, but the fundamentals of fluffy, fragrant pilaf are always the same

#### STEP 1 SAUTÉ THE AROMATICS

Why is pilaf so much more flavorful than ordinary steamed rice? It all starts with aromatics—onion, garlic, fennel, carrot, or shallot. In a medium saucepan, begin by cooking  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup aromatics (always onion, plus any of the others if you've got 'em) in

2 Tbsp. olive oil or unsalted butter over medium-high heat until soft and onion is translucent. Season with salt and pepper.

#### STEP 2 SEND IN THE SPICES!

Next, customize your pilaf with ground spices. Cook until fragrant, 30 seconds or so. Savory spices

like coriander and cumin work well, or try warmer ones like cinnamon and allspice. Choose no more than three spices so the flavors stay distinct, and add no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. spices total per cup of rice (less for strong flavors like cinnamon). The goal is to perfume the rice, not overpower it.

#### STEP 3 TIME FOR THE RICE

Once the base is ready, add 1 cup long-grain white rice, such as jasmine or basmati. Cook,

stirring, until the grains are well-coated and some look translucent and the whole mixture smells toasty, about 3 minutes.

#### STEP 4 BOOST FLAVOR WITH BROTH

Another great divide between plain rice and pilaf? The cooking liquid. Here, water is replaced with more potent broth. Add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups low-sodium chicken, vegetable, or seafood broth (a splash of wine doesn't hurt, either), season with salt and pepper, bring to a

boil, and reduce to a bare simmer. Cover and cook until liquid has been absorbed, 12–15 minutes.

#### STEP 5 LET IT REST

Remove from heat and fluff the rice with a fork. Then cover the pot with a clean dish towel and seal with the lid for 10 minutes. (The towel absorbs steam, so the rice stays fluffy.)

#### STEP 6 FINISH WITH FLAIR

You're not quite done yet! Before serving, fold in

#### THREE TO TRY PILAF COMBOS WE LOVE

- 1 fennel (plus fronds) + turmeric + almonds + cilantro (pictured)
- 2 carrot + cumin + parsley + pine nuts
- 3 garlic + cinnamon + mint + pistachios

2 Tbsp. fresh tender herbs (cilantro, parsley, mint, and/or chives) for brightness and a handful of **chopped toasted nuts** (almonds, pecans, pistachios, pine nuts, or hazelnuts) for crunch. In a sweet mood? Throw in a few plump, **currants or raisins**. This is your pilaf.

