

Chicken and Basmati Pilaf with Saffron, Pistachios, and Peas

Adapted from [*Forever Summer*](#) by Nigella Lawson (Hyperion, 2003)

This is an amazing meal, with beautiful sunny colors and a bright mix of flavors. It's fancy enough for company but simple enough for a Tuesday. The only necessary advanced planning is to marinate the chicken for an hour ahead of time. Feel free to switch up the nuts; Lawson calls for toasted cashews, pine nuts, and almonds as well as pistachios. I like the combination of pistachios and peas, but that's just me.

Serves 6

3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons whole milk yogurt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1-1/2 lemons, divided
1-1/4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into small chunks
1 tablespoon butter
2-3 tablespoons olive oil
2-1/4 cups basmati rice
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth (or stock)
1/2 teaspoon saffron threads or ground saffron, or a little more to produce a color you like (I used more)
3-4 cardamom pods, gently crushed with a meat mallet or rolling pin
3/4 cup unsalted, shelled pistachios
1/2 cup frozen peas
Minced fresh parsley, for garnish (optional)

Whisk the yogurt in a medium bowl with the cinnamon and juice of 1/2 lemon. Add the chicken chunks and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for an hour.

In a large saucepan, melt the butter with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Add the rice, tossing to coat. Pour in the broth, and add the saffron, bruised cardamom, and zest and juice of remaining lemon. Bring to a boil, then cover tightly and turn the heat down as low as possible. Cook until the rice has absorbed all the liquid, about 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, fetch the chicken. Heat the remaining oil in a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, place some chicken in a slotted spoon and bang over the sink to allow the excess yogurt to drip off, then pan-fry the chicken until browned and cooked through. Repeat with remaining chicken, removing to a clean plate once it's cooked.

When the rice is ready, use a fork to fluff it a bit, then scrape in the cooked chicken and the pistachios. Shower with parsley, if desired.