

Whole Grain Pilaf with Wild Rice

If you have some friends that are skeptical about eating whole grains, invite them for dinner and make this pilaf! There's nothing about this elegant dish that isn't simply good eatin' and it's easier than teaching a dog not to pay attention!

Along with sweet, sour, salt, and bitter the flavor sensation of "taste" also recognizes the savory characteristic most often imparted by animal products and fat called "umami". When you remove or reduce the oil and meat in your diet you need to employ strategies to replace that very important taste characteristic. Reserving cooking liquids and using them wisely in recipes to enhance the umami quality of foods is one that we will employ here.



Kamut berries	1 cup
Spelt berries	1 cup
Rye berries	1 cup
water	7 cups
Wild Rice	1 cup
Brown Basmati Rice	1 cup

Pressure cook 1 cup each kamut, spelt, and rye berries all together in 7 cups of water for 35 minutes. You'll need at least a 3.5 liter pressure cooker, and there's absolutely no way to get around the pressure cooker here, if you're going to eat whole grains you need a pressure cooker; period. Use a portion of the cooked grains to make a salad so you get double usage out of the grains. In this dish I like my grains to fight back a little, if you prefer less chewy berries then give it a little more than 35 minutes but be careful not to turn them to porridge!

Grain berries soak up different amounts of water depending on many variables but after you strain the berries and let them drip for a while you should come out with 4 cups of liquid, more or less. When you first start reserving liquids it's easy to forget and strain the berries over an open sink. If you do that just use those berries for a salad and make another batch and reserve the cooking liquid. This pilaf is all about that umami rich reserved liquid!

Use the 4 cups of liquid reserved from pressure cooking the grain berries to make a 2 cup batch of brown rice. Any long grain rice will do, I prefer basmati because I think it remains firmer and seems to have a nuttier essence to it. Stay away from medium or short grain rices as they will be more "sticky" than we want for this recipe. The ratio is 2:1, water to rice, for long grain brown rice; I make it 2:1¼, using 2½ cups of rice for our 4 cups of reserved liquid just to make sure that we yield a dry finished product. Make sure to allow the rice to rest after cooking, this will help ensure a dry finished product as well.

Simmer the 1 cup of wild rice in about 6 cups of water the same way you would pasta. Keep an eye on it and remove it from the heat just before the grains open up. I got lucky and cooked the wild rice for the batch in the photograph perfectly; make it look like that! Drain and shock; discard this cooking liquid unless you can find a use for it, it's quite strong and I'm still working on that one.

After the rice has rested turn it out into a rather large mixing bowl, add the grain berries and wild rice, and gently turn from the bottom using a thin rubber spatula. You'll need to season with salt and pepper, careful with the pepper though, it doesn't take much to peak above this rich, but very subtle pilaf.