

Pancetta and Shrimp Fried Rice

Make this tonight: This dish is a no-brainer for a quick weeknight meal. It can be made with leftover rice, frozen shrimp and vegetables. If you have all three on hand, you really have no excuses. We prefer fragrant and delicate long-grain jasmine rice for fried rice, but short or medium-grain rice can be used instead. Don't load down your fried rice with too many ingredients or it'll end up soggy and heavy. Our technique of making a well in the rice and cooking the eggs in the pan with the rice is a bit unorthodox, but we find it works exceptionally well with a cast iron or nonstick pan. And it's one less pan to clean later.

See Cook's Note on shrimp and frozen ingredients.

Ingredients

1 pound small-medium shrimp, 26/30 shrimp per pound, peeled and deveined
2 large cloves garlic, minced or grated
1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon sesame oil, plus additional to drizzle
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine (optional)
Salt
Freshly ground white or black pepper
4 ounces thinly sliced pancetta, chopped
1/4 cup vegetable or canola oil
1 small onion, chopped
5 cups cooked long-grain rice, preferably jasmine rice, cooled
4 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup frozen peas, preferably petite peas
3 scallions, thinly sliced on an angle (about 1 cup)

special equipment

One 12-inch cast iron or nonstick skillet or a wok

Directions

Combine the shrimp, garlic, ginger, soy sauce, sesame oil, sugar, wine (if using), a pinch of salt and pepper to taste in a bowl. Set aside to let marinate for a few minutes.

Cook the pancetta in 1 tablespoon vegetable oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until nearly crisp, about 6 minutes. Remove the pancetta from the pan with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel-lined plate. Increase heat to medium-high. Add the onion to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the shrimp (with its marinade) to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until pink, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the shrimp-onion mixture to a bowl.

Heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in the skillet and add the rice, tossing to coat with the oil. Spread the rice gently into a single layer and let it cook, undisturbed, for 2 minutes to dry out the rice and form a slight crust on the bottom. Toss again and let it cook for another 2 minutes. Push the rice to the sides of the pan to form a well in the center. Add 1 tablespoon vegetable oil to the well and pour the eggs in, stirring constantly to scramble the eggs. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Once they set, stir the eggs into the rice and add the peas, pancetta, shrimp-onion mixture (leaving any liquid behind in the bowl), and a quick drizzle of sesame oil. Cook until peas are warmed through, about 1 minute. Stir in the scallions, transfer to a large bowl or platter, and serve.

Cook's Notes:

Recent reports of slave labor aboard Asian fishing boats, particularly from Thailand, have us reaching for wild Gulf shrimp instead.

Note that the shrimp that you buy “fresh” is previously frozen. We like the flexibility that buying bags of frozen shrimp (and vegetables) give us. We can take out the amount we need when we need it, as opposed to purchasing them as bricks or blocks and having to break them up to thaw them. It does matter where it comes from. If you can't find sustainably or humanely sourced frozen shrimp, then use fresh wild Gulf shrimp instead, or substitute the shrimp for tofu, chicken or omit entirely.

total time: 35 minutes

active prep: 10 minutes

serves: 4 to 6

difficulty: easy to moderate