



Makes: 4 to 6 servings

Time: 35 to 45 minutes, plus resting time

Mark's vegetarian paella starts with sofrito, a mixture of aromatics, herbs, and tomatoes, sautéed in olive oil until it becomes a thick paste. Saffron is traditional in paella, but he also likes to add smoked paprika. It's also traditional to serve it with garlic mayonnaise, but try Chimichurri for a deliciously unorthodox alternative. What is not traditional is his addition of eggs, which bake into the savory rice mixture. It's also delicious without, so they're optional.

No need for a paellera (a two-handled paella pan), but your pan should be wide enough to hold the grains of rice in a thin layer. This will help develop the crusty bits of rice on the bottom of the pan (called socarrat) that are the best part of the dish. Since most home cooks don't own such a big pan, start the paella on the stove in a roasting pan or your largest skillet and move it to the oven. To properly develop the socarrat, put the pan back on the stove for a couple of minutes before serving.

3½ cups vegetable stock or water, plus more if needed

1 Large pinch saffron threads (optional)

1 pound fresh tomatoes, cored, cut into thick wedges, and seeded

Salt and pepper

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, chopped

1 tablespoon minced garlic

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 teaspoons smoked or other paprika

2 cups Spanish or other short-grain white rice or parcooked short-grain brown rice

4–6 eggs (optional)

Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Heat the oven to 450°F. Warm the stock in a medium saucepan with the saffron if you're using it. Put the tomatoes in a bowl, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and drizzle them with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Toss gently to coat.

Put the remaining oil in a large ovenproof skillet over

Meatless
MONDAYS
with **BEDFORD**
2020 IN COOPERATION WITH **MEATLESS MONDAYS**

Mark Bittman's Paella with Tomatoes and Eggs

medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and paprika and cook for a minute more. Add the rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until it's shiny, another minute or 2. Carefully add the stock and stir until just combined.

Put the tomato wedges on top of the rice and drizzle with the juices that accumulated in the bottom of the bowl. Use a large spoon to make 4 to 6 indentations in the rice and carefully crack an egg into each. Put the pan in the oven and roast, undisturbed, for 15 minutes. Check to see if the rice is dry and just tender. If not, return the pan to the oven for another 5 minutes. If the rice looks too dry at this point and still isn't quite done, add a small amount of stock, wine, or water. When the rice is ready, turn off the oven and let it sit for at least 5 and up to 15 minutes.

Remove the pan from the oven and sprinkle with parsley. If you like, put the pan over high heat for a few minutes to develop a bit of a bottom crust before serving.



Mark Bittman's Variations for Paella with Tomatoes and Eggs

Paella with Eggplant

Instead of tomatoes and eggs, use 1 lb eggplant, peeled if you like, and cubed. In Step 1, increase the oil to 2 tablespoons.

Paella with Mushroom Caps

Instead of tomatoes and eggs, use 1 lb fresh mushrooms like cremini (sometimes called “baby bellas”) or shiitake. Trim the stems and save them for another use, but leave the caps whole. Proceed with the recipe, putting caps on top of the rice, smooth side up.

Paella with Spinach and Lemon Zest

You'll have to pile the spinach up on top of the rice, but it will cook down and form a lovely green topping: Instead of tomatoes and eggs, use 1 lb fresh spinach, rinsed, trimmed of thick stems, and chopped. When you put it in the bowl with the olive oil, add 1 tablespoon minced lemon zest.

Paella with Fava Beans

You could also make this with limas or edamame: Instead of the tomatoes and eggs, use 1 cup shelled and peeled fava beans (frozen are fine).

7 Other Toppings for Paella

You can experiment with a lot with this dish, and anything that tastes good crunchy and roasted (which is most things) will be great on top of the paella. Just remember to toss the ingredients in olive oil before adding them. Try:

1. Cooked white beans like cannellini, gigantes, or navy beans
2. Thinly sliced potatoes
3. Thinly sliced lemon
4. Crumbled tempeh tossed with smoked paprika and cumin
5. 1 head roasted garlic cloves, squeezed from the skin
6. Sliced roasted red peppers
7. Whole scallions