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Spring Rice Pilaf

Serves 6

Take plain rice to the next level with just a few different steps, and a couple of extra ingredients! The first step of sautéing and toasting the rice grains brings an extra, nutty layer of flavor to the entire dish. Improvise additional flavors with any number of items ranging from vegetables, nuts, and/or fruit. We've chosen a pilaf profile that's bright in both color and flavor – one that complements our spring menu to perfection.

4 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 ounces (about 8-9) button mushrooms, coarsely chopped
1 bunch (8-9) scallions, thinly sliced
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1 cup long-grain white rice
1/2 cup (about 4 oz.) vermicelli
(or any other small pasta)
1/2 cup dried apricots, finely minced
3 cups chicken stock
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon minced parsley

Directions:

1. In a large sauté pan, melt the butter with the olive oil, and sauté the mushrooms until limp and any released water evaporates, about 4-5 minutes. Add the sliced scallions and crushed garlic and sauté another 30 seconds.
2. Add the rice and vermicelli to the sauté pan. Continue sautéing until the rice and pasta pieces just begin to turn a golden brown and become slightly toasted – about 4-5 minutes.
3. Finely chop the dried apricots (snipping with a kitchen shears works best). Add them to the sauté pan. Add the chicken stock and salt; stir well. Bring the pot to a boil, then turn down the heat to low. Cover and cook for about 15 minutes. Check at this point to see if all liquid has been absorbed and if the rice is tender. If excess liquid remains, continue cooking, uncovered. Or, if the liquid is gone, but the rice is not yet tender, add a 1/4 cup of water and continue cooking, covered.
4. Fluff the rice and transfer to a serving platter. Garnish generously with the minced parsley and serve.