

Jambalaya

2 tbsp peanut oil, butter, or animal fat of your choice
1 package smoked sausage, sliced into half rounds
2 cups diced onion
1 cup diced celery
1 cup diced green bell pepper
1 diced Jalapeno pepper
5 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
1 small can tomato paste
1 tbsp Cajun seasoning of choice (I like Emeril's Essence)
1 ½ cups white rice
5 cups stock or broth
2 tbsp Crystal or Louisiana hot sauce
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
2 chicken thighs, chopped
Green onions, chopped



There is a well-honored tradition in the restaurant industry, and that's one of recipe theft. Cooks can and will recreate the things they learn in the kitchens they work in once they get home to their own kitchens. They will make it, tweak it, and those recipes will become part of their repertoire. It's known, it's expected, and a good Chef will teach their cooks so that the recipes don't become so bungled as to embarrass the Chef. And while jambalaya is something I've cooked throughout my life, my current place of employment has taught me a few things that have made a drastic improvement, and I'm passing those on to you.

First, the smokier, the better. Smoked sausage is a definite must (I don't usually go for seafood jambalaya. If that's your jam, I suggest finding an Emeril recipe and following his sage advice.). I didn't have smoked chicken, so had to cook some fresh thighs, but if you have smoked chicken, or smoked pork, or smoked whatever, use it. If you have stock that was made from smoked bones, use it. If you have smoked paprika use it. I wouldn't use liquid smoke since most of those just taste gross. But you could even use a little smoked chipotle in adobo if you really like the heat. Smoke is your friend.

Second, hot sauce and Worcestershire in the cooking liquid. You have two options for hot sauce, Crystal and Louisiana. I picked these because they're acidic. I like Tabasco, but it's not punchy enough to work here. Trust me. Worcestershire is needed because of its depth of flavor. Again, trust me.

The rest of the tricks, we'll get into as they come up.

Begin by heating your oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add in your sausage, and brown, stirring occasionally, until it's a little crispy, smells heavenly, and the oil has slightly changed color. This will take about 4 minutes. Then, add in the onion, celery, and peppers (this is called the Trinity) and sauté until translucent. This will take about another 4 minutes. Then add the garlic (the garlic is the Pope).

Now, add the tomato paste and mix it thoroughly. Let it cook over medium heat until the paste caramelizes against the bottom of the pot. This is another trick I learned from my work. It adds a delicious depth.

Once your tomato paste is ready, add in the rice, the stock, the Worcestershire, the hot sauce, the chicken thighs, and a little more Cajun seasoning. Let it simmer over medium until the rice is cooked, about 30 minutes, but it will depend on the amount of liquid and the heat. Don't stop cooking until the rice is cooked. You may need to add extra stock or water.

When the rice is cooked, stir in chopped green onions and serve, hot sauce on the side.