



# Lobster & Chicken Paella

*serves 12 (inspired by Seamus Mullen & José Andrés)*

- Salmorra:
  - 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
  - 12 cloves garlic, peeled
  - 3 ñora chiles, stems and seeds removed (or substitute a couple of dried sweet chile like Ancho or California)
  - 16 ounces canned plum tomatoes, drained
  - 1 teaspoon sugar
  - 1/4 teaspoon pimentón
- Paella:
  - 8-10 tablespoons Spanish olive oil (or any good olive oil)
  - 2 1/2 pounds chicken thighs, cut into 2" pieces
  - 6 cups shiitake mushrooms, stalks discarded and thinly slices
  - 1 generous cup salmorra
  - 4 1/2 cups short-grain Spanish rice (preferably Bomba or Calasparra)
  - tails & claws from 6 lobsters
  - 15 cups good quality fish stock
  - 3 large pinches saffron
  - sea salt, to taste
  - fresh basil and parsley, finely chopped, for garnish

special equipment: 22" paella pan

First, make the salmorra:

Heat the oil in a medium pot over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté; until soft, about 2 minutes. Add the chili peppers and toast, stirring, for about 3 minutes,

then add the tomatoes and sugar. Cook for 15 minutes or until the tomato liquid evaporates. Stir in the pimentón. Transfer the mixture to a blender and purée. Pour into a bowl, and season to taste with salt.

While the salmorra cooks, prep the lobster. Slice the tail horizontally into 3 or 4 pieces. Separate the claws from the knuckles and cut the knuckles into 2 pieces. Crack the claws so they will be easy to pull apart once they are cooked (a hammer works well for this). Refrigerate lobster while you prep the remaining ingredients.

A couple of hours before your guests are scheduled to arrive, precook the lobster, chicken, mushrooms and salmorra. I did this over a couple of burners on my stovetop. Have a couple of baking sheets lined with parchment paper or foil at the ready.

Over high heat, warm 4 tablespoons of the olive oil in the paella pan until just smoking. Add the lobster pieces and sauté, about 1 minute on each side. Transfer the lobster to a baking sheet and cover with foil. Pour 4 more tablespoons of the olive oil into the pan, add the chicken pieces and sauté a little more oil to the pan, then add the mushrooms and sauté for another couple of minutes. Stir in the salmorra and cook for a few minutes. Turn off the heat and cover the pan with foil until you're ready to get going.

About an hour before you are ready to serve the paella, assemble all your ingredients near your cooktop. Set the paella pan with the mushroom-salmorra mix over a high flame and pour in 13 cups of the stock. As it heats up, add three pinches of saffron and stir until well combined. Once the stock begins to bubble strongly (this will take a while), stir in the rice. Stir the rice well to combine with all the ingredients, and keep giving it an occasional stir.

After about 20 minutes, stop stirring entirely. Do not touch the rice again, except to sneak a tiny bite to test for doneness. Watch the rice and listen to it. If it begins to make a crackling sound like it is frying, add a little more stock. It's OK if it begins to stick and scorch a bit as this forms a thin crust on the bottom of the paella known as the socarrat. It's considered a delicacy.

Once the rice has absorbed most of the stock (about another 20 minutes), spread the chicken pieces over the surface and then add the lobster pieces, shell-side down, ringing the claws around the edge and the tail pieces in the middle. Test the rice and add a little more stock if you think it needs it. Cook for about 10-15 minutes more, until the rice has absorbed all of the liquid and the lobster and chicken are cooked through.

Remove the paella from the grill, cover with clean kitchen towels (or foil if you can't bear that) and let the paella rest for 5-10 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with sea

salt and scatter generously with chopped basil and parsley. Pass more salt at the table.