



FOOD &amp; DRINK | SLOW FOOD FAST

## This Rice Recipe Has Everything, Plus a Turmeric-Butter-Fried Egg

Quick, easy, inexpensive, even healthyish: This dish of rice and lentils dotted with rich dates is destined to be your new go-to. With that buttery egg on top, it will be your new crush



LUSCIOUS LAYERS A buttery combination of sautéed onions and dates brings a rich, salty-sweet dimension to the lentils and rice. PHOTO: TED + CHELSEA CAVANAUGH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FOOD STYLING BY SARAH KARNASIEWICZ, PROP STYLING BY CARLA GONZALEZ-HART

By *Kitty Greenwald*

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THE CHEF: NASIM ALIKHANI



ILLUSTRATION: JOE MCKENDRY

Her Restaurant: Sofreh, in Brooklyn, N.Y.

What She's Known For: Honoring the

WITHIN MONTHS of opening her first-ever restaurant, Brooklyn's bright and airy Sofreh, at the age of 59, Nasim Alikhani earned glowing reviews for her cooking. She attributes her success to a lifetime of lessons in traditional Iranian cuisine, some of them humbling. "When I was 11, I cooked rice with lentils and dates for the first time, all by myself," she said. "It was perfect...except the lentils were raw."

Over time she's mastered the dish, and her third Slow Food Fast recipe represents years of tweaking and perfecting. Here, she combines basmati rice and green lentils with a rich mix of sautéed onions and dates. Then she crowns the dish with a golden fried egg basted in turmeric butter.

Green lentils cook quickly, so there's little risk of repeating the mistake Ms. Alikhani made as an 11-year-old. Simply simmer them first, then add

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culinary traditions she grew up with in Iran. Tending to every detail in her restaurant to ensure a gracious welcome.

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the rice to the pot. To ensure that the basmati ends up tender and fluffy, before cooking rinse the grains thoroughly in several changes of water to remove excess starch.

Though Sofreh's menu offers various rice dishes, this one is the go-to in Ms. Alikhani's home. "I've made it many times," she said. "It's fast and easy, it's a complete meal and it's inexpensive."

**TOTAL TIME:** 30 minutes **SERVES:** 4

¾ cup green lentils, rinsed

5 cups water

½ tablespoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1 tablespoon kosher salt

1½ cups basmati rice, rinsed

1 medium onion, minced

3 tablespoons olive oil

4 tablespoons butter

6 dates, pitted and diced

6 eggs

½ cup strained yogurt

1. In a medium pot, combine lentils, water, cinnamon, ½ teaspoon turmeric and salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Cover and simmer until lentils are cooked but still firm, about 10 minutes. Uncover and stir in rice. Simmer, uncovered, about 7 minutes more. Stir, reduce heat to low, cover pot again and simmer until rice is tender and liquid has evaporated, about 10 minutes more.

2. Meanwhile, slick a medium sauté pan with 2 tablespoons oil. Set pan over medium heat, add onions and sauté until golden and crisp at edges, 3-4 minutes. Remove onions from pan and set aside. Return pan to heat and melt half the butter. Add dates and sauté until just warmed through, 1-2 minutes. Turn off heat and stir dates into cooked onions.

3. Stir date-onion mixture into cooked lentil rice. Wipe medium sauté pan clean and set over medium heat. Heat remaining oil and stir in turmeric. Once hot, melt remaining butter. Crack eggs into sizzling butter and fry, basting with turmeric butter from pan, until whites are set and yolks are warmed through but still runny, about 2 minutes. Serve eggs over lentil rice, with yogurt on the side.

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