

Rice Cake

Ingredients

This is for making the rice:

- 4 cups white rice

You don't need to get fancy here. You can just use regular ol' rice. That said, some do prefer Arborio.

- 8 cups cold water
- 1 handful fresh parsley, chopped or torn sort of fine without going insane... but no stems

I occasionally get impatient with this step and use dried parsley.

- 2 round tsp garlic powder

It's better to use fresh garlic, but I cut corners; naturally, the amount should be to your taste.

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt (or to taste)
- 1 tsp pepper (or to taste... 1 tsp is sometimes too peppery for folks)

This is for making the cheese stuff:

- 8 large eggs, whisked
- 18 oz Parmesan cheese, grated

Dry Monterey jack is more traditional if you can get it. (Rosa used to make her own.) A quarter of a wheel is more than enough (even after cutting off the rind), with several ounces left over for snacking. The flavor will *sometimes* be milder than with Parmesan (depending upon the age of the wheel), so for the Italian blend (below), you might want to use stronger cheeses, like mostly Asiago.

- 8 oz shredded "Italian Blend" cheeses (e.g., Asiago, mozzarella, fontina, provolone, and so on)

- 15 oz ricotta (My personal preference is for real ricotta made from whey, rather than “forced” versions from milk and vinegar.)
- 24 oz small curd cottage cheese

Directions

1. First, get the rice going. Add everything *but* the rice to the cold water in a large pot (i.e., parsley, garlic, olive oil, salt, and pepper). Then add the rice and turn to high.
2. Stir occasionally as the water heats to keep the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pan and burning.
3. When the water is boiling (actually roiling), cover and reduce to “just above low.” This takes about 15-20 minutes, again stirring every few minutes to keep it from sticking.
4. Preheat the oven to 325° F (165° C). When you start this depends upon how fast your oven heats up, but right after you get the rice going is usually a convenient moment.
5. While the rice is cooking, add everything else to the big ol’ pan (i.e., eggs and various cheeses). Stir everything together with a big fork, and level out the mixture when you’re done. It doesn’t have to be really well mixed at this point.
6. Wipe some olive oil into the 9×13 pans.
7. When the rice is done, scoop it into the pan over the cheese stuff. *Now* is the time to mix it all together well.
8. Transfer this mixture to the glass pans. This is a good way to do that: Set the mixing pan in front of you on the counter, with the two glass pans to either side. Alternate scoops into those glass pans to keep things even. (If you wimp out and make just half a batch, then this transfer to the single glass pan is easy.) The glass pans are going to be cooking together in the same oven, so you want them to hold equal amounts.
9. Once the mix is divided, smooth it out so that it’s level. Some folks like to roughen up the surface with a fork, but that small amount of difference melts down flat.
10. Pop the pans into the oven.
11. Set the timer for 60 minutes.
12. Wait.

13. After the hour is over, you're going to be checking every several minutes until the surfaces are golden brown on top (sort of reddish), but where you can still see plenty of yellow mixed in. Not all yellow. Not all pale. With practice, you'll know when they are just right. Don't be afraid to keep leaving them in just a little longer. You can also look through the sides of the glass pans, towards the bottom, to see how well things are coloring up.
14. You can let the rice cakes set for a while after taking them out of the oven, but there should be plenty for you to try at different temperatures: piping hot, cooled down a bit, right out of the fridge, nuked, whatever you like.