

Vegetarian paella: Because Spain would want you to improvise

Think paella and you probably picture seafood nestled in warm rice, says Joe Yonan in *Cool Beans* (Ten Speed Press). But in Spain, “there are many, many versions, including plenty that are all veg.” I’ve been making paellas since I first visited Valencia years ago, and I learned my technique from Spanish cookbook author Penelope Casas. This version includes chickpeas, because Spain loves chickpeas, as well as green beans, spinach, and blackened shishito peppers. Buy some good wine and crusty bread to go with this dish and you’re set. “It’s such a perfect dinner party centerpiece: It feeds—and wows—a crowd.”



Seared shishitos change the rules.

Recipe of the week

Paella with chickpeas, green beans, and shishito peppers

- 6 cups no-salt-added vegetable broth
- ¼ tsp crumbled saffron threads
- 2 tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 24 small shishito peppers, stemmed but left whole
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 red bell peppers, chopped
- 2 tsp Spanish smoked paprika
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 lb fresh green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves

- 3 cups imported Spanish rice, preferably Calasparra (may substitute Arborio)
- 3 cups cooked or canned no-salt-added chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups spinach, chopped
- 1 cup vegan or traditional mayonnaise, mixed with 1 finely chopped garlic clove

Preheat oven to 400. In a saucepan, combine broth and saffron over medium-high heat, bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and cover.

Set a box grater over a bowl and run cut side of tomatoes across the coarse side of grater, continuing until you are left with just the skins.

Heat a 17- to 18-inch paella pan across two or three burners (or use two 10- to 11-inch cast-iron skillets), over medium-high heat. Pour in oil; when it shimmers, add shishitos, searing each side for a minute or two. Use tongs to transfer them to a plate.

Add onion, garlic, and bell peppers to oil and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, 6 to 8 minutes. Stir in paprika, cumin, and salt and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in green beans and cook, stirring frequently, until they lose a little crunch.

Stir in tomato pulp and parsley and cook about 30 seconds, then stir in rice, coating it well with pan mixture. Stir in broth, chickpeas, and spinach and taste; add more salt if needed. Cook, stirring and rotating pan occasionally, until mixture is no longer soupy but rice is still covered by liquid, about 5 minutes. Nestle shishitos on the rice and transfer pan to oven. Bake, uncovered, until rice is al dente, 12 to 15 minutes. Remove, cover with aluminum foil, and let sit for 10 minutes, until rice is fully cooked. Bring pan to table and dish up, then pass the garlicky mayonnaise. Serves 8-10.

Albuquerque: The other place to eat in New Mexico



Vernon's 'hidden' decadence

Campo The on-site restaurant at Los Poblanos Historic Inn has a distinct location advantage: The inn is set amid an organic lavender farm—a beautiful, and fragrant, place for a meal. Many ingredients are grown on site, and the menu changes seasonally, “but you can’t go wrong, especially if you order something with lavender in it.” Try the lavender chicken breast with crispy achote rice, perhaps, plus a lavender margarita. 4803 Rio Grande Blvd. NW, Los Ranchos, (505) 344-9297

Vernon's Speakeasy While in Los Ranchos, a village surrounded by the city, don’t miss this hidden steak house. Because it plays up the speakeasy theme, you’re given a password when you make a reservation, allowing you entrance into a windowless space with “a classy, old-timey vibe.” The menu is a throwback, too: iceberg wedge salads, lobster bisque, and dry-aged rib eye. 6855 4th Street NW, Suite A, Los Ranchos, (505) 341-0831

El Pinto “Don’t be turned off by the massive size of this place.” When you crave traditional New Mexican fare, this award-winning institution can check every box. Consider the Kyzer Farms Tomahawk pork chop and a bowl of posole. The breakfast eggs come from El Pinto’s own chickens. 10500 4th St. NW, (505) 898-1771

If you think New Mexico has only one food destination, you probably underestimate Albuquerque, said Kassandra Cloos in *DenverPost.com*. The largest city in the state “more than holds its own in a food fight against Santa Fe,” and it’s more affordable, too. The excellence of the traditional New Mexican fare might not surprise you. This is a state, after all, where even McDonald’s sells a green-chile cheeseburger. But greater Albuquerque doesn’t stop there.

Cahors: The original malbec

Malbec has become “synonymous with Argentina,” but that’s not where the story begins, said Roger Voss and Michael Schachner in *WineEnthusiast.com*. The grape hails from southwestern France, where in the Cahors region it produces a “magnificently structured” so-called black wine that “demands respect” even in the local producers’ value bottlings.

2016 Lionel Osmin & Cie (\$12). This well-balanced wine “has a dry core that contrasts with rich black fruit.” It’s also a terrific value.

2017 Chateau Labastide Haute (\$17). Age this one until 2021 if you can. Its fruitiness is “still up front,” but it’s a “richly structured” wine with “complex tannins.”

2016 Georges Vigouroux Château de Haute-Serre (\$24). Though dense with dark-fruit flavor, this poised malbec also “shows restraint and even elegance.” A final note of juicy acidity adds freshness.

