

Cuban Imperial Rice Casserole (Arroz Imperial)

⌚ Prep: 25m

🔥 Cook: 35m

Σ Total: 60m

🍽️ 8 servings



COOKING SEQUENCE & CHECKPOINTS

- 1

Poach Chicken, Cook Yellow Rice & Sofrito

⌚ 25 min

Poach chicken breast in 4 cups salted water with bay leaf to ≥165°F (74°C), shred, and toss in a pan sofrito of olive oil, diced onion, bell pepper, garlic, and salt; use the poaching broth to prepare the warm yellow rice.
✓ Checkpoint: Warm yellow rice, sauced shredded chicken, and diced ham ready.
- 2

Compact First Rice Layer

⌚ 5 min

Grease a 9×13-inch baking dish with olive oil, press half the warm yellow rice firmly into the bottom, and spread an even layer of mayonnaise over top.
✓ Checkpoint: Firm base with smooth mayo barrier.
- 3

Layer Chicken, Ham & Top Rice

⌚ 10 min

Layer the shredded chicken criollo and diced sweet ham evenly, then compact the remaining yellow rice on top and spread with the remaining mayonnaise.
✓ Checkpoint: Neatly compacted multi-layer casserole.
- 4

Top with Pimientos & Bake

⌚ 20 min

Blanket with shredded cheese and arrange the 0.5 cup roasted pimiento strips on top. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 20 minutes until bubbling and golden-brown (≥165°F / 74°C center).
✓ Checkpoint: Bubbling golden cheese crust.

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FOOD SAFETY & INTERNAL TEMPERATURE: 165°F (74°C) USDA POULTRY MINIMUM AND 165°F (74°C) IN THE CENTER OF THE BAKED CASSEROLE

USDA Food Safety Standard: Poached chicken must reach at least 165°F (74°C), and the assembled layered rice casserole must bake until the center reaches ≥165°F (74°C).

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MASTER DONENESS CHECKPOINT:

Distinct, cleanly cut layers with a bubbling, golden-brown melted cheese crust.

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WHY IT WORKS:

Mayonnaise Moisture Barrier:
Spreading mayonnaise between warm rice layers locks in steam, creating a luxurious creamy texture that keeps rice succulent.

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TROUBLESHOOTING:

Layers slide apart: Compact each rice layer firmly with the back of a measuring cup or spoon.

MISE EN PLACE / INGREDIENTS [13]

☐ 4 cups Cooked seasoned yellow rice with bijol & beer

☐ 1 cup Diced boiled sweet ham

☐ 2 cups Shredded Gouda or mozzarella cheese

☐ 4 cups Water (for poaching chicken and simmering rice)

☐ 1 whole Green or red bell pepper, finely diced

☐ 1 leaf Dried bay leaf

☐ 1.5 tsp Kosher salt

☐ 3 cups Shredded chicken in criollo tomato sofrito

☐ 1 cup Real mayonnaise (Hellmann's)

☐ 0.5 cup (4 oz jar) Canned roasted red pimiento strips (Goya)

☐ 1 whole Yellow onion, finely diced

☐ 4 cloves Garlic cloves, minced

☐ 2 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil (for sofrito and greasing baking dish)

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US SUPERMARKET BRAND GUIDE

Real Mayonnaise: Hellmann's Real Mayonnaise

High emulsion stability prevents oil separation in oven heat.

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Condiment aisle.