Desserts / Spain

Arroz con Leche

A slow-cooked Spanish rice pudding where the starch from the rice thickens the milk naturally until it becomes a single, unctuous mass that ripples when the pot is stirred. Lemon zest and a cinnamon stick infuse as the rice swells, and the finished pudding is served cold, with a stripe of ground cinnamon across the top that disappears into its surface like earth into snow.

Time 45 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 1 cup Short-grain white rice (Arborio or Bomba)
- ☐ 0.5 cup Caster sugar
- ☐ 2 strips Lemon zest (2 strips, no pith)
- ☐ 1 pinch Fine salt
- ☐ 4 cups Whole milk
- ☐ 1 stick Cinnamon stick
- ☐ 1 tbsp Unsalted butter
- ☐ 1 tsp Ground cinnamon, for topping

Let's make it.

01 Rinse the rice briefly under cold water. Combine milk, rice, cinnamon stick, lemon zest strips, and salt in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a gentle simmer, stirring frequently to prevent the milk from scorching on the base. Once it simmers, reduce to the lowest heat setting.

02 After 10 minutes, add the sugar and stir to dissolve. Continue cooking on the lowest heat, stirring every 3–4 minutes, for a total of 30–35 minutes from the point of adding the rice. The pudding is done when it has thickened to a loose, flowing cream — it should still look slightly underdone in the pot, as it will thicken further as it cools.

03 Remove the cinnamon stick and lemon zest strips. Stir in the butter until melted — it adds a silkiness that enriches the finish. Pour into individual serving bowls or one large dish. Press a piece of plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the pudding to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or until fully cold and set.

04 Remove the plastic wrap. Dust the surface with ground cinnamon through a fine sieve, tracing a neat stripe or covering the entire surface evenly. Serve immediately from the refrigerator — arroz con leche is best cold. Do not stir the cinnamon in; it sits on top as both flavour and visual mark of completion.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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