



## Meatless Monday: Spring Vegetable Paella

By Jenny Abel

I ran across an article recently about how meat consumption and production varies widely from country to country. Global meat production amounts to 285 million tons of meat (beef, pork, chicken, sheep, and goats) per year, which equates to 36 kg., or 80 pounds, per person. However, Americans consume 270 lb. (122 kg.) of meat each year compared to Bangladeshis, who eat just 4 lb. (1.8 kg.).

As heavy meat consumers, Americans are also big meat producers. For example, most of the 95 million tons of beef produced each year come from North America and Europe. By comparison, in sub-Saharan Africa, a region with a population three times that of the U.S., only 3 million tons of beef are produced each year.

According to a [2006 report](#) from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N., meat production accounts for 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions, a number that some environmentalists consider too low (and that the meat industry has rejected as being too high). As has been stated in previous articles in this series, cutting your meat consumption can clearly minimize your carbon footprint. If you're not ready to go entirely meat-free, it pays to be choosy about which animals you consume. According to [the article where I found the above statistics](#):

“The most climate-friendly meats comes from pigs and poultry, which account for only 10% of total livestock greenhouse-gas emissions while contributing more than three times as much meat globally as cattle. Pork and poultry are also more efficient for feed, requiring up to five times less feed to produce a kg of protein than a cow, a sheep or a goat.”

As an encouragement to make at least one dinner each week meat-free, here's a tasty recipe to herald the approach of spring:

### Spring Vegetable Paella

From [Feast: Generous Vegetarian Meals for Any Eater and Every Appetite](#), by Sarah Copeland

Serves 6

2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil  
8 oz. assorted mushrooms such as shiitake, oyster, and button mushrooms, cleaned and trimmed  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 cups sofrito (recipe follows)  
Small pinch of saffron threads  
1 cup short grain brown rice such as Arborio  
2 cups cooked chickpeas

2 ½-3 cups vegetable stock  
1 head garlic, unpeeled  
8 artichoke hearts  
2 handfuls fresh shelled peas or sugar snap peas, sliced on the diagonal  
2 lemons, cut into wedges

Step 1: Heat olive oil in a large skillet on medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally until they are crispy but still juicy, 6 to 8 minutes, seasoning with salt and pepper toward the end of cooking. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

Step 2: Add the sofrito and saffron to the pan and stir together. Add the rice and cook over medium heat, stirring into the sofrito, to absorb the flavors and toast the rice a little, about five minutes.

Step 3: Stir in the chickpeas, stock, and 1 tsp salt and bring to a simmer. Meanwhile, slice off the top one-fourth of the head of the garlic so the cloves are exposed. Nestle it down into the rice. Place the artichoke hearts and mushrooms around the pan.

Step 4: If you're cooking on an electric range, preheat the oven to 350. Bring the liquid to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and transfer to the oven. Bake until the rice is fully cooked, 45 minutes to one hour.

If you're cooking on a gas range, bring the liquid to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and cook until the rice is fully cooked, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Step 5: Do not peek and do not stir! An authentic paella should have a layer of crusty rice on the bottom of the paella pan. Add the peas to the pan in the last 2 minutes of cooking. When the paella is cooked, remove the garlic head from the center and set aside for a few minutes before eating.

Step 6: Garnish the paella with pea shoots (if using) and lemon wedges. Squeeze fresh lemon juice over the paella as you eat it.

#### Sofrito recipe

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil  
2 large yellow onions, finely chopped  
Generous pinch of raw sugar or turbinado sugar  
Sea salt  
4 beefsteak or 6 plum tomatoes  
Heaping ½ tsp smoked paprika

Step 1: Heat the olive oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the onions, sugar, and ½ tsp salt. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are soft and pale golden, about 30 minutes. Taste the onions; they should be subtly sweet.

Step 2: While the onions cook, cut the tomatoes in half lengthwise. Grate the tomatoes on the large holes of a box grater into a bowl all the way down to the skins. Discard the skins and add the pulp, juices, and paprika to the onions. Cook until the juices thicken, 12 to 15 minutes. Taste and season with more salt as needed. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to one week.

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