

Indian Cardamom Rice Pudding (Kheer)

Passport to Peoplehood

Jews are a multicultural people who live around the world.

Big Ideas

1. Jews around the world eat diets that are similar to those of their neighbors.
2. Rice pudding is a food that is part of Jewish diets around the world.
3. Foods that are familiar to the North American diet might take different forms in different cultures.



The Jewish community in India is one of the world's oldest continuous diaspora communities. The Bene Israel, the oldest of the three main Indian Jewish groups, may have come during the reign of the biblical King Solomon. From the start, Jews were welcomed into Indian society. In addition to adapting their style of dress and music to the local norms, it not surprising that their food is similar to what other Indians eat as well.

And because Indian food is regional, Indian Jewish food comes in many forms. Throughout India, rice is central to the diet and it became a staple of Indian Jewish food as well. Rice takes on many forms, whole, pounded, made into flour, sweet and savory.

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The foods of Indian Jews are often not exactly the same as those of their neighbors. The laws of keeping kosher and holiday customs played a strong role in shaping Indian Jewish cuisine. Additionally, elements of Indian Jewish cuisine are influenced by the connections with Jews in other countries, such as the eating of Iraqi kahi pastry on Shavuot. It takes on an Indian twist as it is fried not baked, because ovens are rare in traditional Indian kitchens.

Rice pudding is popular in India as well as throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Rice pudding is a dish that will be familiar to many as it exists in many different cultures. An Indian version is called Kheer, and the spices are typical of the Middle East and Sub-Continental Asia, some of which may not be familiar to North American palates.

This is a very flavorful Indian rice pudding. If prepped ahead of time, it takes about 25 minutes to make. This recipe is for 4 generous servings. It can easily be halved or multiplied to feed the number of participants.

Materials

Saucepan with lid
Wooden spoon
Measuring cups and spoons
Serving bowl

Ingredients

2 cups coconut milk	1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
2 cups milk	1/2 teaspoon rose water (optional)
3 tablespoons white sugar	1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted
1/2 cup Basmati rice	1/4 cup chopped pistachio nuts
1/4 cup raisins	

Directions

1. Bring the coconut milk, milk and sugar to a boil in a large saucepan. Add basmati rice, and simmer over low heat until the mixture thickens and the rice is tender, about 20 minutes.
2. Stir in the raisins, cardamom and rose water, and cook for a few more minutes. Spoon into serving bowls, and garnish with almonds and pistachios.

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Discussion

Why is rice important in so many cultures around the world? Can you name some different ways rice is used in different cultures?

How is rice served in your home? Do you think of rice as a main meal? A side dish? A dessert? Why or why not?

Have you had rice pudding before? If yes, how is this rice pudding like or unlike other rice puddings you have eaten?