

West African-inspired Jollof Rice

A deeply savory, tomato-rich West African-inspired rice dish layered with fresh peppers, ginger, garlic, and warming spices. This oil-free version uses carefully prepared brown rice for beautifully separate grains and bold authentic flavor while supporting metabolic and inflammatory health goals.



Servings: 8-10

Ingredients

Rice

- 3 cups brown basmati rice or brown jasmine rice
- Water for rinsing

Jollof Flavor Base

- 1 large onion, diced
- 6 Roma tomatoes
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1/2 orange bell pepper
- 5 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger
- 1-2 vegan non-chicken bouillon cubes
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/2 teaspoon black or white pepper
- 1 bay leaf

Ingredients

Optional Heat

- 1 whole habanero pepper, slit slightly at the bottom

This adds beautiful flavor and warmth without making the entire dish overwhelmingly spicy unless broken open.

Finishing Vegetables

- 3 green onions, sliced

Optional Fat for Texture

- 1 teaspoon pure unrefined coconut oil

Liquid

- 4 to 4 1/4 cups vegetable broth or water

Start lower for firmer grains.

You can always add a splash later if needed.

STEP 1: WASH THE RICE

Rinse rice several times until water runs mostly clear (3-4 exchanges).

Drain VERY well.

Allow the rice to sit for a few minutes to remove excess moisture.

STEP 2: DRY-SAUTÉ THE RICE (IMPORTANT)

Place drained rice into a dry heavy skillet or pot.

Cook over medium heat for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

The rice should:

- smell lightly nutty
- feel drier
- remain uncooked
- NOT brown deeply

This step helps:

- keep kernels tighter
- reduce swelling
- improve separation
- create better texture

If using coconut oil:

add the 1 teaspoon during the last minute of sautéing and stir well.

Set rice aside.

Instructions

STEP 3: BLEND THE TOMATO BASE

Blend until mostly smooth:

- tomatoes
- red pepper
- orange pepper
- garlic
- ginger

Do not add much water.

STEP 4: BUILD THE FLAVOR BASE

In a heavy pot:

Add onions with 2-3 tablespoons water.

Cook over medium heat for 5-7 minutes until softened and lightly caramelized.

Add:

- blended tomato mixture
- bouillon
- smoked paprika
- thyme
- curry powder
- black pepper
- bay leaf

Cook uncovered for 12-15 minutes.

This step is critical.

The sauce should:

- deepen in color
- reduce significantly
- lose the raw tomato flavor
- become rich and concentrated

Stir occasionally.

Add tiny splashes of water only if needed.

STEP 5: ADD THE HABANERO

Place the whole slit habanero pepper gently into the sauce.

Do not break it open.

This allows the flavor to infuse slowly into the rice.

STEP 6: ADD THE RICE

Add the dry-sautéed rice into the sauce.

Stir thoroughly so every grain is coated.

Cook 1-2 minutes while stirring gently.

STEP 7: STEAM THE RICE

Add:

- 4 to 4 1/4 cups broth or water

Bring to a gentle simmer.

Cover tightly.

Reduce heat to LOW.

Cook undisturbed for:

- 40-45 minutes

Do NOT stir repeatedly.

Too much stirring causes:

- broken grains
- mushiness
- oversized kernels

STEP 8: STEAM FINISH

Once liquid is absorbed:

- turn heat OFF
- leave covered 10 more minutes

This final steam stage is what helps create:

- firmer texture
- beautifully separate grains
- white-rice-like mouthfeel

STEP 9: FINISH FRESH

Remove:

- bay leaf
- habanero pepper

Fluff gently with a fork.

Fold in: (optional)

- green onions

The fresh vegetables should stay vibrant and slightly crisp.