



Turkish Style Brown Rice Salad with Labneh



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Ingredients (serves 4)

For the labneh

- 200g Greek yogurt
- pinch salt

For the rice

- 300g brown basmati rice
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 40g currants
- 60g flaked almonds
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 onions, finely sliced
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- ¼ tsp ground allspice
- ½ tsp sea salt
- handful fresh flat-leaf parsley
- handful fresh mint leaves
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- zest and juice of half a lemon

TIP: Labneh is a type of curd cheese which can be easily made at home.

Just plan ahead as it needs to be prepared the day before in readiness for its overnight draining.

Method

For the labneh

Place the yogurt in a bowl and add the pinch of salt and stir to mix well.

Line a sieve with muslin or a thin clean tea towel and place over a bowl. Spoon the yogurt in to the cloth-lined sieve and put in the fridge overnight.

Discard the liquid that has collected in the bowl and use the soft creamy curd cheese that is left in the cloth. You can either simply put it in a bowl or roll into individual balls.

For the rice

First soak the rice in a bowl of cold water for half an hour, then drain in a sieve.

To cook the rice, first boil a kettle of water. Place the rice in a large sauce pan along with the cinnamon stick and currants and pour over the just-boiled water until it comes up to a centimetre above the level of the rice.

Place on the hob and bring to the boil, immediately turn down the heat to the very lowest setting and put a lid on the pan. Leave to gently steam for 30 minutes. Place the cooked rice in a bowl and cover to keep warm.

Meanwhile, put the almonds in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat. Cook for 2-3 minutes, shaking and stirring them until they are lightly browned and toasted. Remove and set aside.

Lightly crush the cumin seeds using a pestle and mortar.

Add the oil to the pan and when the oil is hot, tip in the cumin seeds and allow them to fry briefly before adding the onions, allspice and salt. Turn the heat to low and cook the onions for 5 minutes then add the garlic and cook for a further 5 minutes until the spices release their aroma and the onions are golden and soft.

Add the onion mixture and almonds to the bowl of rice, along with the vinegar and tear over the parsley and mint leaves. Mix in gently with a fork.

Serve in bowls along with the labneh on the side with the lemon zest sprinkled over and finished with a final squeeze of lemon juice.