

Toasted Rice Pudding

Serves 4–6; makes 5 cups

People who love rice pudding would truly and absolutely die for it. That fact alone made my exploration of this dessert a little fraught. Is it best served warm? Cold? Cinnamon optional? Egg yolks added? Could I please everyone? Of course not. But I could please myself.

This rice pudding is inspired by my first rice pudding memory: Kozy Shack cups at my aunt’s house down the Jersey Shore. And listen, is this rice pudding better than Kozy Shack eaten at the Jersey Shore? I can’t say that it is. But it’s pretty great. And I think you’ll love it (but only if you love rice pudding).

Try to release your fear when the rice pudding is looser than you think it ought to be when going into the fridge (in this house, rice pudding is chilled). It will thicken as it cools, in this you must trust.

Ingredients

1 cinnamon stick or ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/3 cup/70g long-grain (jasmine, basmati, or Jasmati) rice

3 cups/720g whole milk (or unsweetened oat or almond milk, extra creamy if available)

½ cup/110g sugar

1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, or ½ teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

Pinch of kosher salt

2 egg yolks (optional)

Instructions

- 1 In a medium pot, combine the rice and cinnamon stick (if using; ground cinnamon goes in later) and toast over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until the grains of rice smell slightly toasty and turn a barely perceptible shade of golden brown, 4–5 minutes.
- 2 Add the milk, sugar, 2 cups/480g water, and salt. If using, scrape in the vanilla seeds (throw in the pod or save it to dry), or add the vanilla extract. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, then reduce the heat to medium-low and continue simmering until the rice is totally cooked through and tender and you notice the liquid beginning to thicken up, 20–25 minutes (the rice will still be intact, almost swimming in a liquid, but the liquid itself will be starchy, able to coat the back of a spoon).
- 3 Reduce the heat to low and continue to stir constantly, making sure no grains of rice stick to the bottom of the pot while encouraging the starch to release from the grains and into the liquid (not unlike risotto). Continue simmering until the rice is beyond tender (but not mush) and the mixture appears pudding-like, another 15–20 minutes.
- 4 Remove the pudding from the heat and whisk in ground cinnamon (if using) and the egg yolks (if using), stirring to cook them slightly. Transfer the pudding to serving cups, bowls, or coupes, or one giant bowl, whatever you like. If you like warm rice pudding, you can eat it now. Otherwise, place plastic wrap directly on the surface to avoid the skin (or who cares, let it have a skin!) and let it chill completely in the refrigerator.

DO AHEAD: Rice pudding can be made 5 days ahead of time, kept wrapped and refrigerated.