Persian Style Fish with Herbed Rice*

(Traditionally served on Norooz)

Ingredients:

- 2 cups long grain rice (Basmati rice)
- 3 tilapia fish fillets, or a fish of your choice
- ¼ cup chopped dill, fresh or dried
- ¼ cup chopped chives or scallions (optional)
- ¼ cup chopped parsley
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro (optional)
- ½ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 Tablespoons salt
- 1 Tablespoon fish spice (A mix of garlic powder, red & black pepper, cumin, and coriander seed)
- ½ teaspoon ground saffron dissolved into 4 Tablespoons hot water (If saffron is unavailable, use turmeric instead)
- 3 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- vegetable oil

Instructions:

1. Rinse the rice with cool water a few times to remove some of the starch. When finished, cover it with water to let it soak a while, add 1 Tablespoon salt, and set it aside for a couple of hours. (Soaking is not required, but the longer you soak the rice, the fluffier it will get when cooked.)
2. In a large non-stick pot, bring 5 cups of water to a boil over medium-high heat. Drain the rice and pour it into the boiling water. Add 1 Tablespoon salt. Bring water back to a boil. After 5-7 minutes test to see if the rice is ready. Rice should still be firm in the center and soft on the outside. Another way to tell it's ready to drain is when the rice grains start rising to the surface of the water.
3. Drain the rice with a colander and rinse with cool water.
4. Add the chopped herbs to the rice and mix. Be careful not to break the rice grains.
5. Place the pot back on the stove, add 3 Tablespoon of vegetable oil, and heat it over medium heat. Place the rice and herb mixture in the pot in pyramid form. Drizzle the butter on top, create 3 holes in the rice with the bottom of a spoon to release the steam. Lower the heat, cover the pot, and let the rice cook for 45-50 minutes on very low heat.

6. Meanwhile, mix the flour with turmeric, fish spice, black pepper and 1 Tablespoon salt. You can add garlic powder too.
7. Lightly coat each fillet with the flour mixture and set aside.
8. Heat 3-4 Tablespoons of vegetable oil in a skillet over medium heat. Place the fish fillets in the pan and fry both sides until golden and crispy.
9. Mix the saffron water with the lemon juice and add it to the fillets.
10. Reduce the heat, cover with the lid, and let it cook until the fillets absorb the saffron and lemon juice (just a few minutes).
11. When the rice is done, use a spatula to gently transfer the rice onto a platter, then serve it with the fish fillets. You can save a bit of the saffron water from Step 9 and mix it with some rice to add (a bright yellow) color and extra flavor (see photo).

Enjoy!

*This recipe was inspired by thepersianpot.com