Not-Fried Rice and Vegetables

Fried rice is actually a misnomer since everything is actually quickly sautéed with a minimal amount of oil. I have a classic vegetable fried rice recipe on my blog and I think it makes a very nutritious, inexpensive and delicious meal. Fried rice is very easy to master, and typically is made in order to use up leftover cold rice and whatever other bits are in the fridge, from veggies to cooked meat. Cooked quinoa, millet, or lentils can be subbed for the rice. You can also use part grain/part chickpeas.

Serves 4

*2 Tablespoons unrefined, cold pressed extra-virgin olive oil*

*4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced*

*a pinch of chili flakes (optional)*

*1/2 pint cherry tomatoes, halved*

*1/2 bunch asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces*

*1 or 2 cups of shiitake mushrooms, stems removed, caps wiped clean with a damp paper towel and sliced thinly*

*sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste*

*2 to 3 cups baby leafy greens like chard, kale and spinach or 6 stalks of kale, stemmed and leaves chopped or more*

*3 to 4 cups cooked, cold short grain brown rice or* ***millet***

*chicken stock, vegetable stock or water, if necessary*

*optional accompaniment ideas: poached or fried egg, toasted, chopped nuts, hot sauce*

***Italian version****: add a few leaves of thinly sliced basil at the end and finish with grated Parmesan or Pecorino cheese*

*Tex-Mex version: substitute chopped bell pepper for the asparagus and add 1/4 chopped cilantro, top with chopped avocado*

*Greek version: add 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano in Step 2. Add 1/4 cup parsley or dill at the end and top with crumbled feta or tzatziki*

*Indian curry version: add 1 teaspoon curry powder in Step 2, stir in 1/4 cup chopped cilantro at the end*

1. Warm a large skillet over medium heat. Add the olive oil and when warm, add the garlic and chili flakes. Sauté until the garlic is just starting to turn golden on the edges, about 30-60 seconds.

2. Add the cherry tomatoes, asparagus, mushrooms, and a pinch of salt and pepper and sauté until the tomatoes just start to lose their shape and the asparagus and mushrooms are tender, about 5 to 6 minutes. Add the fresh basil and sauté until wilted.

3. Add the cooked rice, the greens, and another pinch of salt and pepper and sauté until the rice is warmed through and the greens are wilted. If the rice and vegetables are sticking to the pan, add a splash of water or stock. Serve immediately with or without suggested accompaniments.

Or omit the tomatoes and basil and use different quick-cooking vegetables like thinly sliced fennel, diced zucchini, shredded carrots, blanched cauliflower florets, peas, or scallions. And use different ingredients to add in later, such as cooked beets, sliced oranges, avocado, olives and so on.