Brown Rice, Celery & Orange Salad

Fresh from the garden: bay leaves, celery, lemons, mint, oranges, oregano, parsley, spring onions, thyme

Recipe Source: Desley Insall, Kitchen Specialist, Collingwood College

When a recipe calls for 'celery hearts', it really means using the tender inner stalks where they are still packed close together and attached to the base. Home-grown celery is not usually as pale and large as commercial bunches. Remove any coarse outside stalks (they are ideal for stock) and cut the bunch about 12 centimetres from the base. This 'clump' of pale celery is a 'celery heart'. If very large it can be halved lengthwise.

Equipment:
colander
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rice cooker (or a large pot with lid if using the absorption method)
tea towel
chopping board
kitchen knife
metric measuring cups and spoons
large heavy-based pan or pot
wooden spoon or spatula
2 small bowls
lemon zester
orange juicer
large serving bowl

Ingredients:
2 cups long-grain brown rice
4 cups water
3 bay leaves
1 bunch of celery
3 garlic cloves
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 oranges
1 lemon
small handful spring onions
couple of handfuls or more of flatleaf parsley
small handful oregano sprigs
small handful thyme sprigs
small handful mint sprigs
1½ teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

What to do:
- Wash the brown rice under cold water in a colander, then cook it according to the absorption method below.
- Trim each celery bunch as described in the introduction. Wash the celery hearts, removing any damaged parts. Slice the celery hearts into 5 mm slices.
- Finely chop the garlic.
- Heat the olive oil in the heavy-based pan over medium heat, then add the celery hearts and chopped garlic. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally with the spoon or spatula. Set aside in a small bowl for later.
• Zest the oranges and set aside the zest in another small bowl.
• Juice the oranges and the lemon. Keep the juice. (The lemon and orange juice can be mixed together.)
• Wash and dry the spring onions and remove any damaged outer leaves or tops. Cut away any roots. Slice the onions thinly and put them in the large serving bowl.
• Wash and gently dry the parsley, then chop it and add it to the large serving bowl.
• Wash and dry the oregano, thyme and mint. Pluck the leaves from the stems, place the stems in the compost bucket, and chop or slice the leaves. Add them to the large serving bowl.
• Add the cooked celery hearts to the large serving bowl.
• Add the orange zest and toss the salad gently to mix.
• Now add the lemon and orange juice, salt and pepper.
• When the rice is cooked, remove the bay leaves. Add the cooked rice to the large serving bowl.
• Stir the salad gently and taste for seasoning.
• You can garnish the salad with edible flowers and fresh herbs from the garden or with crisp fried celery leaves.

Rice by absorption: Pour water into the pot until covering the rice by about 2½ cm, or do as many cooks do: stick your finger into the pot with the tip of your index finger barely touching the rice. The water level should come just to the first joint of your finger. Cover the pot tightly and bring the rice and water to simmering point over moderate heat, then reduce heat to its lowest. Place a folded pad of kitchen paper over the rice and jam on the lid. After 30 minutes, lift the lid and, if all the water has evaporated, remove the pot from the heat and let it stand, still covered, for 5 minutes.