**Want comfort food? Try this fried rice recipe**

Without a doubt, fried rice is my very favorite comfort food.

It is easy to make, tasty and inexpensive (the magic word; my budget for food and beverage during college days was $5 a week. Guess how much was for food and how much was for “beverage.”) However, I ate well and stayed healthy, thank goodness for my PaoPao’s (grandma’s) fried rice recipe.

To have the best fried rice, we have to start with a perfect batch of cooked rice. A lot of folks ask me just how to cook rice. Being Chinese, I shiver looking at boxes of Uncle Ben’s “parboiled” rice in the market. Just what is parboiled rice? I’ve never tried it and have no intention to (sorry, Uncle Ben).

I got my secret recipe from my PaoPao, and I am going to share that with you all here. Follow these simple steps. I never use any measuring cups but, somehow, the rice comes out perfect each and every time. If you are not the adventurous type, invest $20 and get an electric rice cooker.

So, here it goes:

Pick the right size pot with tight-fitting lid. Put one handful of rice for each guest in the pot. If you have four people eating, put in four handfuls of rice. Always add one more handful for the house, just in case someone has a bigger appetite.

Rinse the rice with cold running water to wash out the dust and dirt. Put the pot on the stove, add water. How much water? Well, here is the trick — take your second finger, let the tip just touch the rice, and add water so the water level reaches the first joint. That’s all the water you will need. Pretty scientific, eh? Oh, if you would like your rice to glisten and shine, add one-fourth cup of oil to the water.

Heat up the stove and bring water to a boil. When the water starts bubbling, turn heat down to simmer. Cover with lid. Set it and forget it. The rice is usually cooked after 15 to 20 minutes, but simmering on low heat is fine for at least one-half hour or more.

So, you have perfect steamed rice, now what? Every time I make rice, I cook more than I need and use the leftovers for fried rice later. Leave the leftover rice in the refrigerator overnight for best results. Now, ready for the best fried rice ever?

Get all the ingredients you need first, and set them on the counter. The worst part of cooking is when you have to scrounge for products that you need right in the middle of cooking. So here is the list.

* Nonstick wok
* Two spatulas
* Oil
* Salt and pepper
* Eggs
* Frozen peas and carrots
* Your choice of meats
* Oyster sauce

Take the rice out from the refrigerator and break it down by rubbing them gently so they won’t stick together.

Heat up the wok, scramble the eggs. Add a tablespoon of oil in heated wok and pour egg batter in. Use the spatula to break the eggs in smaller pieces and set aside.

Heat up wok again, then add rice. Gently stir rice around, making sure that they don’t stick to the wok. Add a little oil if you prefer, but it is not necessary with a nonstick wok.

While the rice is getting heated up, add salt and pepper to taste. Most restaurants use soya sauce for color and flavor, but I prefer oyster sauce. I like the distinctive taste and that it adds a darker color to the rice.

Keep turning the rice with your spatulas and adjust the seasoning to taste. When the rice is hot to touch, add frozen peas, carrots and your choice of precooked meat. I personally love to put whatever leftovers I have from the night before, just make sure that they are diced up in smaller pieces.

Add the cooked eggs right before serving and sprinkle with shredded scallions on top for extra color and flavors. There you have it.

My favorite meats are the tasty leftovers, such as diced ham, turkey, pork chops, etc. Nothing goes to waste. You can also make a combo fried rice with shrimp, barbecue pork, eggs and whatever else you like. We have a fancy name for that, “yang chow fried rice.” You can serve that by itself or in banquet style, with Hawaiian chicken and Szechuan beef.

And bless your foods with a glass of Gewurztraminer. Oh, life is good, enjoy!

*Peter Kwong’s book, “Wok and Roll” is available at phkwong.com.*