

Angel Mejias: Man can cook

Aspiring chef took inspiration from PBS regular Martin Yan.

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Angel Mejia displays his Brown Fried Rice With Sweet and S...

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Sometimes, television can be a good thing. Especially if it inspires one to cook.

That's the case with Angel Mejias, 33, who found his path to this recipe for Brown Fried Rice With Sweet and Sour Pork through a famous Public Television show.

"When I was 12 years old, I used to watch 'Yan Can Cook,' " Mejias said of the popular program starring chef Martin Yan.

While still young, Mejias, a Lancaster native, worked at the Save-A-Lot grocery store, where he would earn money to buy ingredients. Today, he's keeping busy wrapping up a degree from the Pennsylvania School of Culinary Arts at York Technical Institute.

"I have 10 more months to go before becoming a certified chef," Mejias said.

He's also working as the new kitchen manager at Señorita Burrrita, a longtime downtown Lancaster burrito restaurant that still maintains a stand in Central Market and is getting ready to open its new home in Manheim Township.

Mejias has always pleased his family with this recipe, which is low in sodium but high in flavor. "Every time we have a reunion," Mejias said proudly, "they love it."

His wife, Kristin, 30, "loves Asian food," Mejias noted. They have a son, Rome, 4, who's not quite into cooking — yet — preferring the talents of a nonculinary superstar. "He likes to sing to Bruno Mars!"

BROWN FRIED RICE WITH SWEET AND SOUR PORK

For the sauce:

2 teaspoons corn starch

1/4 cup water

1/4 cup sugar

1/4 cup ketchup

1/4 cup vinegar

1/4 cup pineapple juice

1/4 ounce carrots, chopped fine

1/4 ounce onion, chopped fine

Mix corn starch and water; whisk until consistency is to your liking, set aside.

In a sauce pan, place sugar, ketchup, vinegar, juice, carrots and onion. Heat mixture to a boil,

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then lower heat. Add corn starch and water. Strain to filter out carrots and onion.

For the rice:

1/2 cup peas, cooked according to package directions

1/4 cup carrots, diced

Scallions, chopped, to taste

2 tablespoons oil (Mejias prefers Smart Balance oil)

2 eggs, scrambled

2 cups brown rice, cooked according to package directions

Soy sauce, to taste

Place peas, carrots and scallions and 1 tablespoon of the oil into a wok; cook 2 minutes on medium-high heat. Add scrambled eggs and the remaining tablespoon of the oil. Add rice and soy sauce.

For the pork:

1 cup flour

Salt and pepper, to taste

2 center-cut uncooked pork chops (about 1 pound), diced into 1 1/2-inch pieces

2 eggs, beaten

1 cup panko crumbs

1/2 cup oil

Mix flour, salt and pepper. Dip chopped pork in mix. Dip pork in egg, then panko crumbs. Lay out pork on a sheet tray covered with wax paper.

Place oil in shallow frying pan; turn on to medium-high heat. Transfer pork to pan; cook for 10 minutes.

Plate pork with rice; sauce can be served on the side. Makes two servings.

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