

Creative Use of Leftovers

I know many who say they hate leftovers. It's true that a quick reheat in the microwave makes for a less than exciting meal, but there's room to be creative and turn those leftover bits into something interesting. Here are a few ideas to stoke the fires of culinary creativity:

A classic Spanish approach is to make a **paella**. While purists might frown, this is a fun way to build a tasty meal from what's sitting around the fridge.

Paella

- Leftover whatever: veg & meat, cut in bite-sized chunks
 - Sofrito, rice & stock
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- Use our paella recipe, or quick rice recipe as a reference and enjoy.

Tortilla/omelette

- Leftover whatever: veg & meat, cut in bite-sized chunks
 - Eggs - roughly one egg per cup of leftovers
 - Sautee leftovers in a bit of olive oil with some diced onion in a non-stick frying pan
 - Add beaten eggs to the pan, mix, cook on both sides.
 - Use our tortilla recipe as a reference and enjoy.
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- **Note:** leftover paella (or fried rice) or pasta makes for a great tortilla.

Pasta

- Leftover whatever: veg & meat, cut in bite-sized chunks
 - Tomato sauce, canned tomatoes or commercial marinara sauce.
 - Pasta - I like spaghetti, but you chose.
 - Spices - oregano, thyme, red pepper flakes, your choice
 - Sautee leftovers in a bit of olive oil with some chopped onion
 - Add spices, followed by the tomato, simmer for 10/15 minutes
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- In the meantime, Cook pasta, mix with the sauce & enjoy.

Fried rice

- Leftover whatever: veg & meat, cut in bite-sized chunks
 - 1/4 onion (or leek), finely diced
 - Cooked white rice (best cooked a day in advance, it's drier and browns better) or even some leftover paella
 - 1 tbsp soy sauce
 - Sautee the onion in some olive oil until tender, add rice and cook on medium high until the rice starts to brown
 - Stir in the leftovers, cook until heated through
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- Splash on the soy sauce, stir and serve.

Patatas a la Importancia

Some time ago, on a wine scouting trip to north central Spain, I discovered this amazingly satisfying potato dish at a roadside restaurant that was recommended by a winemaker friend. It's cheap and simple to prepare with few ingredients; no special skills required. The name fits: Important potatoes.

Ingredients

- 1 large potato, peeled & cut in 1/2" (1 cm) slices.
- 1 egg (beaten), more if needed
- 1 clove of garlic (grated or use a garlic press)
- 1 small onion (finely diced)
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- White wine
- 1 cup of stock (chicken, beef, veg), more if needed
- Saffron (a few threads)

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- Salt, pepper & flour

Preparation

- Mix grated garlic with saffron and a splash of white wine, set aside.
- Season potato slices with salt & pepper. Dip in the egg, then dredge in flour.
- Heat olive oil in a non-stick frying pan, lightly brown potato slices on both sides, set aside. They don't have to be cooked through, just a nice golden brown.
- Sautee the onion (same pan) until tender.
- Stir in a tablespoon of flour, mix well, cook for a minute on medium. Stir in the garlic mixture.
- Add the potato slices, and enough stock to cover. Simmer for **20 minutes** or so, moving the potatoes around carefully from time to time. Add extra stock if it starts to dry out or gets too thick.

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- Make sure the potato is cooked through**, check sauce for salt & adjust if needed. That's it.

Note:

1. Saffron can be omitted or substitute pimentón or tumeric. Add some "heat", if that's your thing.
2. Serve with a light covering of the sauce as a main dish or a side; top with parsley, chopped chives, crispy bacon, fried onion or grated cheese.
3. There are many variations: some include chunks of ham, bacon, sausage, chorizo or mushrooms; another with clams, added just at the end so they don't over cook. Shrimp might slot in as well.