



KATA

KATA (*kateh*), a simple, everyday rice dish characteristic for the Caspian provinces, Gilan and Mazandaran. It is prepared by combining all the ingredients (rice, two cups of water for every cup of rice, butter, and salt) and boiling over medium heat; the rice is not soaked previously. When the water is absorbed, the heat is reduced and the pot covered to let the rice simmer until it is fully cooked. Without a further step of being steamed, the rice is turned out into a dish and can be shaped into loaf form (*kata-qālebi*). (For additional details regarding the varieties of rice used and preparation, see [BERENJ i. IN IRAN](#) and [iii. IN COOKING](#); [GILĀN xxi. COOKING](#); Batmanglij, p. 97). Kateh is usually softer than *polow* (soaked rice cooked together with other ingredients, then steamed; for preparation and varieties of dishes, see [BERENJ i](#)). At a main meal, kata may be served with meat or fish or a stew (*koreš*). Kateh may be served plain (*kata-sefid* “white”; *kata-sāda* “plain” in Montazami, pp. 789-91), and cold kata (*kata-sard*) is usually cut into lozenges and served as a side dish (Dehḵodā, s.v., on *kata-ye rašti* “Rasht-style” in Gilan), as an alternative to *čelow* (pre-soaked, steamed rice, served plain). Kateh may also be mixed with additional ingredients, pre-cooked or cooked in the rice, to make a *dami* (see below and [DAMPOQT\[AK\]](#)).

References to kata appear from at least the Qajar period, distinguishing it from similar dishes using steamed rice, that is *čelow/čelāv* and *polow/polāv* (on which, see [BERENJ i](#)). But it has sometimes been described with those familiar terms (e.g., kata equated with *koška-polāv*, rice cooked without butter, in Dehḵodā, s.vv.). The chef at the royal court of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah Qājār (r.



1848-96) records *kata* and *čelow* as two dishes which have the same ingredients and the same preparation, except that, for *čelow*, the rice is steamed after cooking is completed; for *kata*, the rice is simply taken off the stove, allowed to cool, and then cut with a knife (Mirzā ‘Ali-Akbar Khan Āšpazbāši, pp. 7-8; cf. the dish *kata-čelow*, mentioned p. 9). The French adventurer and Persian civil servant *Rišār Khan* (Jules Richard, 1816-91), in his book on Persian cuisine (p. 50), calls plain *kata* by the name *kata-polow* (also cited in Dehḡodā, s.v.). A 1933 description of *kata* defines it as the loaf form, *polow-qālebi* (Bāmdād, pp. 19-20; also *Dastur-e ṭabbāki*, p. 62).

The term *dami* likewise is attested in the late 19th century (see DAMPOKT[AK]). As in the case of *polow*, which it parallels (see BERENJ i), the *dami* has many varieties, which are designated by the principal added ingredient (Daryābandari, pp. 839-59). *Damis* with grains include *dami-‘adasi* (lentil), *dami-bāqelā* (fava bean), *dami-māš* (mung bean), *dami-lubiā-qermez* (kidney bean), and *dami-lubiā-češm-bolboli* (black-eyed pea). Popular vegetable *damis* are *dami-esfenāj* (spinach), *dami-toršak* (sorrel), *dami-kalam* (cabbage), *dami-havij* (carrot), *dami-gešniz* (coriander), and *dami-šebet* (dill). Meat *damis* are cooked particularly with ground lamb or beef mixed with tomato paste. Varieties with dried plums and with raisins also are described in the 1933 source (Bāmdād, pp. 19-20).

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