

Brown Rice

Brown rice has twice as much fiber as white rice because it has not been stripped of its bran. It may be the least likely of all grains and cereals to provoke intestinal gas and is anti-diarrheal as well as a natural laxative. It will not irritate sensitive colons and discourages peptic ulcers. Brown rice contains anti-cancer protease inhibitors, lowers cholesterol, and tends to block the development of kidney stones. However you happen to feel about brown rice, it certainly seems to like you, anyway.

Brown rice is nutrition-dense, fiber-rich, and fluent in just about any language or culture you choose. It can be a side dish, main dish, salad, bread, or dessert. Also, brown rice is equally agreeable with beans, cheese, meat, eggs, nuts, fish, and cooked or raw vegetables. Some of us even enjoy brown rice as a hot or cold breakfast cereal with milk and honey.

This is the most useful of all the grains, in my opinion, which is why most of my whole grain recipes call for brown rice. I suggest making a batch at least once a week and storing it in the refrigerator for snacks or meals any time of day.

Which Variety?

In large stores with bulk grain sections you can find a mind boggling selection of long, short, and medium-grain rice, both domestic and imported, organic and otherwise, and including brown, white, red, black, sticky, sweet, jasmine, and basmati. (Wild rice, by the way, is the seed of a wild grass and not technically part of the rice family.)

The delicate and aromatic brown basmati rice is my preference for most purposes, so I tend to buy it and cook it without giving any thought to other varieties. Short grain brown rice, however, is better for recipes where plumper, moister rice is

appropriate, like *Brown Rice Power Patties* (page 174). Also, if you are serving rice as a simple side dish, the stickier short grain rice is easier to pick up with a fork.

Sticky rice

For *Brown Rice Pudding* (page 177) you could experiment with sweet (also called sticky) brown rice. It is very glutinous and clumpy when cooked, and has an intriguing texture that suits rice pudding. If you cook sticky rice as you do regular brown rice, it will turn into wet, glutinous sludge. Sticky rice should be soaked for 8 – 24 hours, and then steamed for an hour. (I use a sieve that fits snugly in a 3-quart saucepan. The lid happens to fit the rim of the sieve perfectly, but you can use foil to make your own lid.) Make sure the water underneath doesn't touch the rice.

Freezing rice

Brown rice freezes well. I pack it in 2-cup portions in 1-pint plastic bags, removing as much air as I can before sealing the bags. I then place the bag of rice (dated, if I happen to remember) into a similarly-sized plastic container and freeze it. When I need the rice I remove the frozen lump from the bag and steam it over a half inch of water in a 1-quart saucepan. (More below.)

Reheating rice

The best way to reheat brown rice is by steaming. It will taste freshly made, as well as wait patiently over the steam until you are ready to serve. Let the steam escape so the rice doesn't get soggy, and don't let the pot boil dry! One method is to set a basket steamer in a saucepan (the size of the basket and saucepan depend on the amount of rice being heated) with water added to just below the basket. Place the cold (or frozen, as mentioned above) cooked rice in the basket, bring the water to a boil, and cover. Three cups of cold cooked rice takes about 15 minutes to heat through.

Basic Baked Brown Rice

A lot of people think they don't like brown rice because they have only eaten badly cooked or undercooked brown rice. There is no good reason for this. If you are not familiar with cooking brown rice, try my directions below.

The most common cooking directions for brown rice involve simmering the rice and water on the stovetop for about 45 minutes. My directions call for starting it on the stove top, then sticking it in the oven and forgetting about it until the timer rings an hour later. With the baking method I can forget the rice while it is cooking and am never at the mercy of capricious burners.

There are other cooking options you may prefer but the important thing is that the final texture of the rice should be tender and moist. In any case, it is one of the most intelligent leftovers you could hope to find in your refrigerator. (The re-heating method mentioned on the previous page is an invaluable tip, not only to give you tender hot rice in 10 minutes, but also to rescue imperfectly-cooked rice.)

(Makes about 5-6 cups cooked brown rice)

- 4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups brown *basmati* rice (see **Note**)

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

1. Bring the water to a brisk boil in a heavy 2½-quart pot. Stir in salt and rice and bring back to the boil. Cover and place in the oven for 60 minutes.
2. Remove from the oven and leave it covered for 10 minutes, then take off lid and fluff cooked rice with a fork, loosening it from the sides of the pot at the same time. Cover with a towel (a paper towel works fine) until cool.
3. Whatever you don't use the same day, store in the refrigerator, covered tightly. (Make sure rice is completely cool before you cover it.) Keeps well for a week. See reheating suggestion on previous page.

Note:

▶ **Brown basmati rice** has a nutty fragrance and a more delicate texture than regular brown rice and I use it pretty much exclusively. However, I have found that even different brands of brown basmati rice absorb water differently. For that reason it is safest to stick to one source to avoid ending up with wet rice one time, and too-dry rice another time. My current favorite is from Trader Joes. For *short grain* brown rice, I find I have to use less water – about 3¾ cups of water to 2 cups of short grain rice.

▶ I never cook less than 2 cups of rice, which makes about 5 – 6 cups of cooked rice. I sleep a lot better if I know there is leftover rice in the refrigerator.

Excerpted from *Good Food, Great Medicine*. For more information see: www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com