

Heart Healthy Fiber Abundant in Brown Rice

by John Rizzo

In our continuous stride to eat healthier, one food that is often left out is rice. I'm not talking about the amount of rice we consume, but the type of rice we consume. And I can honestly tell you that I'm not a good role model here either. Usually the first thing you see on the grocery store shelves is white rice –river rice, converted rice, minute rice, instant rice, long grain rice, and so on. But what we should be looking for is the brown rice; often in the most obscure location amongst the rice.

Think of brown rice like whole wheat bread. Yes, there are some subtle differences in flavor and texture, but I would not consider them discernable differences. Brown rice has a nuttier flavor and is a little grainier in texture than its white counterpart. Depending upon your application, brown rice might just be a perfect substitution for your recipe.

Brown rice is white rice prior to milling and polishing. Milling is the process that removes the outermost layers of bran and germ. Polishing removes the layer that contains the essential healthy fats. After milling and polishing, most of the B vitamins, manganese, and phosphorous are removed. Additionally, almost all the dietary fiber and essential fatty acids are gone. Fortunately, it's not a total loss; white rice is later enriched with B vitamins and iron.

If the aforementioned nutritional advantages aren't enough to make you rethink your choice of rice, maybe the results from a study from American Journal of Clinical Nutrition will. Plain and simple -in a 2003 study, researchers found that women who consumed more whole grains consistently weighed less than women who consumed less whole grains.

A quick note about storing brown rice: unpolished rice still contains the fatty acids which can spoil in time. To maximize the life of your brown rice, store it in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.

Wild Mushroom Rice Pilaf

Yield: 6

Butter or Oil	2 TBL	Bay Leaf	1
Brown Rice	2 Cups	Wild Mushrooms	1.5 Cups
Onion, Minced	1/2 Cup	-Such as Crimini, Shitake, Oyster	
Celery Diced Fine	1/2 Cup		
Chicken Broth	4.5 Cups	Chopped Parley	1 TBL

Wash the mushrooms thoroughly and the dice or slice them into small pieces. Heat the butter or oil up in a heavy duty saucepan. Add the rice and sauté for approximately 3 minutes or until it turns clear and emits a nutty aroma. *(This process helps the rice keeps its shape and inhibits it from sticking together as much as it would if you just boiled it first.)* Add the onions and celery and continue to cook on low heat for about 2 additional minutes.

Stir in the chicken stock, bay leaf and mushrooms. Turn down the heat to a slow simmer and cover the pot. Cook for approximately 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until the rice is tender and all the broth is absorbed. Remove from heat and serve hot.

If the rice is not tender after all the liquid is absorbed, additional broth can be added during the cooking stage until it reaches the desired consistency.