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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

August 2021

THE GRAIN THAT FEEDS THE WORLD, RICE

Grain and Fruit Breakfast Cereal Mix

Italian Rice Croquettes

My Favorite Coconut Rice Pudding

***Pilaf* Grains with Wild Mushrooms**

Spanish Rice *con Queso*

Vietnamese Rice with Tomatoes and Garlic

The words for rice in all European languages can be traced back to the Greek word *oriza*. This etymology suggests a very early introduction of rice to the diets of European civilizations. It is now fairly well-confirmed that rice spread from a single point of domestication in the Valley of the Pearl River region of Ancient China (now, Zhujiang) between 11,482 BC and 6,182 BC. Rice moved across Southeast and South Asia and to Central Asia by means of the caravan routes used by the traders and by the traveling Buddhist monks as they disseminated the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, The Buddha. From Central Asia, rice cultivation spread to the Middle East by the first century AD and, from there, to Europe. With colonization, rice was introduced to all in the known world.



There are two basic cultivars of rice, African rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) and Asian rice (*Oryza sativa*) from which most of the varieties have evolved. The two major subspecies of Asian rice, *indica* and *japonica*, comprise some 40,000 varieties. *Indica* varieties are long-grained and non-glutinous while *japonica* varieties are short-grained and sticky, i. e., glutinous. Although China is the largest producer of rice, Japan's diversity is notable; nine varieties of the Japanese rice varieties are used solely for the making of *sake*.



Rice is an important crop in the Italian agricultural provinces of *Piemonte*, *Tuscan*a, and *Lombardia* and thus it was in 1787 when Thomas Jefferson visited that region of Italy. He secreted rice grains in his jacket pocket, or so it is said, in

violation of the stringent Italian law of the period. These grain seeds became the seeds of the ultimately successful rice-growing industry of the American South.

After the Civil War, cotton production in the South diminished, due in large part to the lack of slave labor. That land, in many cases was flooded to create rice paddies. Rice grown on that land has been found to produce rice with the greatest concentration of arsenic due to the pesticides used to control the boll weevils. Rice grown in Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, and Texas, which collectively produced seventy-six percent of American-grown rice, have been shown to have higher levels of arsenic than do rice harvests from other rice-growing regions worldwide. China tests and controls arsenic levels in rice. Jasmine rice from Thailand and the Mekong Delta and Basmati rice from Pakistan have been tested and shown to have the lowest arsenic content as compared to rice samples from other regions of the world. Note also, that brown rice, preferred by many because it is a whole grain with only the hull removed, has higher arsenic levels than one would find in milled and polished white rice. Since rice plants tend to absorb more arsenic than other food crops, this extra burden of arsenic is a health factor to be considered.

Wild rice, although often included on the list of rice cultivars, is not a rice. Wild rice is the seed of a tall aquatic grass, *Zizania aquatica*. It is not really a rice, although strictly speaking rices are also the seeds of aquatic grasses. Known variously as Indian rice, Canada rice, Tuscarora rice, and, by French explorers, as “crazy oats,” it is native to the wetland regions along the shores of the Great Lakes and their tributary rivers and streams. A closely related grass is native to areas of China and Japan.

GRAIN AND FRUIT BREAKFAST CEREAL MIX

*Good morning!! . . .
good and good for you.
Its convenience is just an extra bonus so you'll never say that
you're in too much of a hurry to make hot cereal again.*

BREAKFAST CEREAL MIX:

TPT - 2 minutes

- 1 1/2 cups dry *toasted* cracked wheat cereal**
- 1/2 cup dry *instant* brown rice**
- 3/4 cup quick-cooking rolled oats**
- 2 tablespoons oat bran**
- 1/2 cup *preservative-free* dried blueberries,
cranberries, cherries, *or* raisins**
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**

In a self-sealing plastic bag, combine wheat cereal, rice, quick oats, oat bran, dried fruit, and cinnamon. Mix thoroughly to insure that dried fruit and seasoning are evenly distributed. Close bag tightly and store in refrigerator or in a canister, tightly sealed, at room temperature for up to 3 months.



Yields sufficient mix for 13 servings

To serve as *HOT* GRAIN AND FRUIT BREAKFAST CEREAL:

TPT - 15 minutes

- 1/3 cup *boiling* water**
- 1/4 cup *two-percent* milk**

- 1/4 cup GRAIN AND FRUIT BREAKFAST CEREAL MIX (*above*)**

- Sugar, pure maple syrup, *or* honey**

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine *boiling* water and milk. Allow to come to the boil. *Reduce heat to LOW-MEDIUM*. Stir in the 1/4 cupful of GRAIN AND FRUIT BREAKFAST CEREAL MIX. Cook, stirring frequently, until most of liquid is absorbed. Add more hot water or milk only if necessary. (*Wheat should be tender and the mixture should be creamy.*)

Turn into cereal bowl and serve with sugar, maple syrup, or honey, as preferred.

Yields 1 serving

Note: Both the basic mix recipe and the cooked cereal recipe may be doubled, when required.

1 SERVING (cooked cereal) –
PROTEIN = 5.2 g.; FAT = 1.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 23.5 g.;
CALORIES = 111; CALORIES FROM FAT = 15%

ITALIAN RICE CROQUETTES

Supple al Telephono or Arancini

TPT - 26 hours and 50 minutes;
24 hours = 1st chilling period;
2 hours = 2nd chilling period

In some parts of Italy the stuffing for “telephone wires” is a complex combination of ground meats to which, of course, mozzarella cheese is added or it just wouldn’t be “telephone wires.” The delicate flavor is then further disguised with a meat gravy. Our version celebrates these unique rice croquettes without overpowering them. Even an Italian-born uncle, who declared that they were not what he remembered, enjoyed them for Easter dinner. Since these rice croquettes may be frozen for several months quite successfully and reheated in a moderate oven, they are a good choice for a special holiday menu.

- 2 cups cold, cooked Italian short-grain Arborio rice***
- 1/4 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)****
- 2 tablespoons shredded (about 1 ounce) well-flavored, domestic, young provolone cheese**
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds—*toasted***
- 1 1/2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh chives**

- 1 1/2 ounces part-skimmed milk, low-moisture mozzarella cheese—cut into 6 equal cubes**

- 1/4 cup whole wheat flour**

- 1 large egg white—slightly beaten**

- 1/2 cup sieved, whole wheat breadcrumbs**
- 1/8 teaspoon dried oregano—*finely* crushed**
- 1/8 teaspoon dried parsley—*finely* crushed**
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

- High-heat* vegetable oil for deep-frying**

- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley, for garnish**

- 1/2 cup Hollandaise sauce*****



In a large mixing bowl, combine *cold, cooked* rice, pasteurized eggs, shredded *provolone* cheese, *toasted* sesame seeds, and *finely* chopped chives. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Form six balls, each firmly packed around a cube of *mozzarella*. *Be sure to cover the mozzarella completely.*

Assemble *three* pie plates. Put flour in one. Put the slightly beaten egg white in the second. In the third, combine sieved breadcrumbs, *finely* crushed oregano and parsley, and black pepper.

Gently roll each rice croquette in flour, then in egg white, and then in seasoned breadcrumbs. When breaded, arrange on a platter, *not touching*, and chill for at least 2 hours until firm.****

Heat oil for deep-frying to 375 degrees F.

Deep-fry two breaded rice croquettes at a time until golden, turning once—about 3 minutes. Drain on absorbent paper and keep warm in 200-degree F. oven until all are prepared.*****

Pyramid on a heated serving platter. Garnish with chopped fresh parsley and serve with Hollandaise sauce.



Yields 6 croquettes
adequate for 3-4*****

Notes: *A Japanese short-grain rice can be substituted, if preferred.

**Because raw eggs present the danger of *Salmonella* poisoning, commercially-available pasteurized eggs are recommended for use in preparing this dish.

***An easy, almost fool-proof blender Hollandaise sauce can be found on p. 522 of volume II of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*.

****Quite honestly, we do prefer to prepare these early in the morning, allowing them to firm up quite thoroughly. This leaves little preparation at dinner time.

*****Be sure that oil temperature has returned to 375 degrees F. before each batch is fried.

*****Instead of downsizing for the two of us, I take advantage of the fact that these do freeze well for a future meal.

When required, this recipe may be easily doubled or tripled.

1/6 SERVING (i. e., per croquette with Hollandaise sauce) –
PROTEIN = 7.1 g.; FAT = 12.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 22.4 g.;
CALORIES = 227; CALORIES FROM FAT = 51%

MY FAVORITE COCONUT RICE PUDDING

TPT - 3 hours and 8 minutes;
2 hours = refrigeration period

Rice pudding is a favorite dessert of mine and it has been since the days when I could barely see up onto the counter space in my grandmother's butler pantry where pies and puddings were set to cool. This version is quite different from the classic Filipino coconut rice pudding shared by a Filipino friend. I make a coconut rice pudding using long grain rice instead of the short grain or sticky rice she uses; I use a light, sulfite-free coconut milk; and I use a combination of coconut milk and cream. It is a lovely dessert for an Asian menu, or any meal.

- 1 quart boiling bottled or refrigerated water**
- 1/2 cup long grain white rice or long grain jasmine rice**

- 1 cup light, sulfite-free coconut milk**
- 1 cup light cream or half and half**
- 1/4 cup sugar**

- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**



long grain

vs



short grain

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, parboil the rice in *boiling* water for 10 minutes. Drain. Return rice to a dry saucepan.

Add coconut milk, cream, and sugar. Set over *MEDIUM* heat and allow to heat until just below the boiling point. *Reduce heat to LOW*. Allow to cook, stirring frequently, until most of moisture has been absorbed—about 45 minutes. Remove from heat.

Add vanilla extract. Stir. Turn into a serving bowl. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Use cream to thin, if pudding appears to be too thick.

Serve chilled.

Yields 4 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.9 g; FAT = 8.0 g; CARBOHYDRATE = 37.2 g.
CALORIES = 225; CALORIES FROM FAT = 32%

PILAF GRAINS WITH WILD MUSHROOMS

TPT - 2 hours and 52 minutes;
2 hours = mushroom soaking period

Rice with butter and grated cheese is often on the menu in Piedmont and Tuscany. It is also a popular side in Portugal as we found when we visited. Challenged by vegetarians, several pousada managers offered the classic dish. We have enhanced the basic dish with dried wild mushrooms and we use a pilaf mixture that elevates this from a comfort food side to an interesting main course offering. The dried mushrooms give this dish an earthy, complex flavor.



2 cups boiling bottled or refrigerated water
1/2 cup mixture of dried mushrooms—porcini, crimini, lobster, chanterelles, morels, shiitake, oyster, black trumpet mushrooms, and/or others of choice* **—well-rinsed and brushed to remove any foreign matter

1 1/4 cups boiling water
1/2 cup wild rice and rice pilaf mixture***

1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon grated pecorino Romano or parmesan cheese

In a mixing bowl, combine dried mushrooms mixture, which have been *well-rinsed and brushed to remove any foreign material*. Add 2 cupfuls *boiling* water. Allow mushrooms to soak for at least 2 hours, or until softened. Press mushrooms down into the soaking liquid occasionally to insure even reconstitution.

Using a slotted spoon, remove mushrooms from mushroom broth to a chopping board. Chop and set aside until required. Reserve WILD MUSHROOM STOCK for future recipes.

In a saucepan set over *LOW* heat combine the 1 1/4 cupfuls *boiling* water and *pilaf* mixture. Cover and cook for about 40 minutes or until all the moisture has been absorbed and the grains are tender.

Add chopped mushrooms, butter, and grated cheese. Place over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat and cook, stirring frequently, until butter is melted and rice mixture has heated through. Turn into a heated serving bowl.

Serve at once.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: *Drying sliced, cultivated mushrooms using one of the inexpensive dehydrators available, is a very simple process. By drying mushrooms yourself you can be assured that they are *well-cleaned, well-trimmed, and flawless.*

***Porcini* (also known as *Cèpes Secjes*, *Boletes*, and *Steinpilze*), morels (*Morchella esculenta*), *chanterelle* (*Cantharellus cibarius*), and lobster (*Hypomyces lactifluorum*) mushrooms, with their seafood-like taste, lend a superbly rich and complex flavor to any dish. Although expensive and scarce in the past, these wonderful mushrooms are now widely available in the dried form. Dried Chinese black, *shiitake* mushrooms (*Lentinus edodes*) are available in Asian markets and food specialty stores. Once soaked, the hard stems of the *shiitake* should be removed before cooking.

***Several mail-order bulk food suppliers market interesting *pilaf* mixtures that are neither seasoned nor salted which work well in this dish. Or, make your own *pilaf* mixture from grains in your larder.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.0 g.; FAT = 3.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 17.7 g.;
CALORIES = 107; CALORIES FROM FAT = 33%

SPANISH RICE *CON QUESO*

TPT - 1 hour and 8 minutes

Whether an attempt to remind themselves that the tomato originated in South America and was introduced to the rest of the world by the Spanish explorers or not, American cooks often labeled foods containing tomatoes as Spanish or Mexican. The resultant dish may not have been authentic or even slightly reminiscent of the “mother cuisine.” Spanish rice is one of those dishes. It is an American invention. The addition of the phrase “con queso,” “with cheese,” is our attempt to direct our thanks to those who brought us the ingredients and the ideas as they traveled our globe looking for a Northwest Passage; for gold; for spices, but finding so very much more than they realized!



1 1/2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
3 medium scallions—green portions only—sliced
1/4 cup finely chopped green bell pepper
1/2 cup uncooked white converted rice

1/2 cup canned, diced tomatoes
1/2 cup bottled or refrigerated water*
1/2 cup vegetarian stock of choice
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano—crushed
Freshly ground mixed peppercorns—red, white, and black—to taste

1/3 cup shredded (about 1 1/2 ounces) sharp Cheddar cheese

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

In a skillet, with cover, set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. When hot, add scallion slices and chopped green pepper. Sauté for 3 or 4 minutes until slightly softened.

Add rice and continue to sauté until rice is *lightly browned*.

Stir in chopped tomatoes, water, stock, tomato paste, crushed oregano, and black pepper. When thoroughly combined, cover and cook *undisturbed* over *very LOW* heat until all liquid is absorbed—about 45 minutes. *Do not stir during cooking period!* Add more water only if absolutely necessary!

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a 1-quart oven-to-table casserole or soufflé dish by coating thoroughly with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Turn cooked rice mixture into prepared casserole or soufflé dish. Sprinkle shredded cheese evenly over top. Place in preheated 350-degree F. oven just until cheese is melted and bubbling—about 5 minutes.

Garnish with chopped fresh parsley just before serving.



Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Notes: *Since the chlorine in tap water destroys the B-vitamin thiamin in grains, it is advisable to cook grains in either bottled water or water that has been refrigerated uncovered for at least 24 hours.

Parboiled sweet green peppers stuffed with this mixture are almost an American tradition.

Leftovers may be frozen for reappearance as a side dish on a future menu.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 5.0 g.; FAT = 4.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.4 g.;
CALORIES = 170; CALORIES FROM FAT = 26%

VIETNAMESE RICE WITH TOMATOES AND GARLIC *Com Do*

TPT - 40 minutes

This is an odd rice dish for Asia, you might say but it is one those recipes that clearly demonstrates the influences of others along the way. The richness of tomatoes and butter entered the Vietnamese cuisine when Europeans, specifically the French, came to Vietnam. Later, Americans brought elements of another influential cuisine to Vietnam during the Vietnam War altering the Vietnamese cuisine perhaps forever. It is not a recipe you will find in a Vietnamese cookbook; it is a recipe you will find in a Vietnamese home. It reminds me somewhat of Spanish rice, another tomato-rice dish that was popular years ago, a dish that satisfied as does this but owed little to the native cuisine to which it was attributed.

1/2 cup dry long grain white rice*

1 1/2 tablespoons butter

2 garlic cloves—very finely chopped

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 1/2 cups bottled or refrigerated water

2 teaspoons Braggs liquid aminos**

6 large lovage leaves, if available



Turn dry rice into a fine sieve. Rinse under cold water for several minutes to remove the surface starch. Drain.

In a non-stick-coated saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt butter. Add drained rice. Cook, *stirring constantly*, for several minutes.

Add *very finely* chopped garlic. Cook, *stirring constantly*, for 1 minute.

Add tomato paste. Cook, *stirring constantly*, for another minute.

Add water and liquid aminos. Allow to come to the boil. *Reduce heat to LOW*. Place lovage leaves on top of the simmering rice. Cover and allow to cook, undisturbed, for about 20 minutes, or until most of the moisture has been absorbed. Using a fork to fluff the rice, turn into a heated serving dish, removing and discarding the lovage leaves as you do.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: *We use either a long grain white jasmine rice from the Mekong Valley or an organic white rice from California.

**Although you can use soy sauce, liquid aminos give this a Southeast Asian fishy nuance.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.0 g; FAT = 4.4 g; CARBOHYDRATE = 21.5 g.
CALORIES = 135; CALORIES FROM FAT = 29%



The concept of the tossed salad presented at the average salad bar begins with a salad base of lettuce, generally just iceberg, and bits and pieces of this and that and a big scoop of a salty, high calorie dressing to disguise it all . . . then, toss.

We can do better than that.

Next month I can promise much more interesting tossed salad ideas.

Please drop by,

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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