



Brown rice, not white, a whole grain

Is rice a whole grain?

Brown rice is a whole grain, but white rice isn't. That doesn't mean white rice isn't healthful; it just doesn't have the benefits of a whole grain.

Brown rice makes the mark because it still contains, well, the whole grain — the bran, germ, and endosperm. The only thing that's removed from brown rice is the inedible hull around the rice kernel. That means it retains all of its original nutrients, including fiber, which are lost when the grain is processed into white rice. These kinds of benefits are the reason behind the standard dietary guideline to make sure half of the grains you consume — including bread, pasta, cereal, crackers, noodles, tortillas and other grain products — are whole grains.

Almost all white rice sold in the United States is "enriched," meaning some of the vitamins and minerals lost during processing are replaced. Specifically, manufacturers add back four B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and folic acid) and iron to enriched white rice. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, both brown rice and enriched white rice contain 15 vitamins and minerals, including potassium, magnesium and selenium.

But the enriching process doesn't add back any fiber. In fact, brown rice has almost 2 grams of fiber in a half-cup serving of cooked rice. Brown rice also retains beneficial phytonutrients, including antioxidants, anthocyanins, phytosterols, tocopherols and many other potentially protective substances, that you won't find in

white rice.

However, brown rice also retains the rice kernel's "aleurone layer," which contains oil and enzymes. That helps give brown rice its distinctive, fuller flavor, but also reduces the product's shelf life. While white rice can be stored at room temperature for extended periods of time, brown rice, even when stored in an airtight container, lasts only about six months before the chance that oils in the rice turn rancid. Store uncooked brown rice in the refrigerator to increase its shelf life.

Brown rice also takes much longer to cook than white rice — up to 50 minutes, three times longer than white rice. The problem is the bran layer, which impedes the water as it tries soaking into the kernel. An alternative is quick-cooking or instant brown rice, which has just as much fiber as regular brown rice, but the end product offers a very different texture.

Another option for brown-rice lovers could be available in the future. According to an April 2010 article in the USDA's Agricultural Research magazine, an Agricultural Research Service (ARS) food technologist has developed a new treatment to reduce brown rice's cooking time to 20 minutes — the cooking time of white rice. The ARS is currently working with manufacturers interested in adopting the new technology.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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By Martha Filipic

614-292-9833

filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Julie Shertzer, registered dietitian and program specialist for Ohio State University Extension in the Department of Human Nutrition, in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

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