

# Versatile rice will help stretch food dollars

AP — Rice's versatility and nutritional benefits can fit into one's diet, but it can also stretch the food budget.

Because of its mild flavor and ability to absorb other flavors, rice can be incorporated into almost any recipe for soups, salads, main dishes and desserts.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends the largest portion of a diet should come from the rice, bread, cereal and pasta group. Recommended daily intake is six to 11 servings; with a serving defined as half a cup of rice.

The nutritional benefits of rice are many.

"Rice is high in complex carbohydrates, and when combined with beans or lentils, it is considered a complete protein," said Melissa Mison, extension human nutrition specialist at Mississippi State University.

If nothing is added during preparation or serving, rice is low in fat, sodium and has no cholesterol. A single serving has only 103 calories for regular mill white rice and 106 calories for brown rice.

While brown rice provides slightly more fiber, vitamin E, phosphorus and calcium than white rice, most of the rice sold in the United States is enriched. Enriched rice is high in iron, thiamin and niacin.

By adding rice to a dish, you can increase the number of servings in a meal.

"Rice is an extender of the food dollar. It can be used in most dishes and adds to the number of

portions," said Mison. "It is low in cost and in the uncooked form can be stored in an airtight container on a shelf or in a pantry for long periods of time."

Once rice has been cooked, Mison said to treat it with the principles of food safety in mind.

"If cooked rice is left at room temperature for more than two hours then it should be thrown away, especially if the dish contains any kind of meat," said Mison. "Remember to always refrigerate immediately after serving."

Here are some nutritious recipes using rice:

## EASY FRIED RICE

1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

2 eggs, beaten

1 cup diced fully cooked ham

1 cup finely chopped fresh mushrooms

1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions

3 cups cooked brown rice, chilled

1 tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce

Heat 1/2-tablespoon oil over medium heat in large skillet or wok. Add eggs and cook without stirring until set. Invert skillet over baking sheet to remove cooked eggs; cut in 1/4-inch strips.

In a skillet, heat remaining 1/2-tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Stir-fry ham, mushrooms, and onions in oil about 3 minutes, or until mushrooms and onions are tender. Stir in cooked rice and re-

served egg strips; sprinkle with soy sauce. Toss lightly; heat thoroughly. Makes 4 servings.

## TURKEY AU GRATIN

1 Package (4.5 to 5.2 oz.) broccoli rice au gratin rice mix

1 cup cubed smoked turkey

1 jar (2 oz.) pimento

12 buttery crackers, crushed

Prepare rice mix in 2-quart saucepan according to package directions. Add turkey and pimento; heat thoroughly. Transfer to serving dish; top with cracker crumbs. Makes 4 servings.

## BROWN RICE CHICKEN BAKE

3 cups cooked brown rice

1 package (10 oz.) frozen green peas

2 cups cooked chicken breast cubes

1/2-cup reduced-calorie mayonnaise

1/2 cup silvered almonds, toasted (optional)

2 teaspoons soy sauce

1/4-teaspoon ground black pepper

dried tarragon leaves

Vegetable cooking spray

Combine rice, peas, chicken, mayonnaise, almonds, soy sauce, pepper, garlic powder and tarragon in bowl. Transfer to 3-quart baking dish coated with cooking spray. Cover and bake at 350 degrees, F. 15 to 20 minutes. Makes 6 servings.



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