

Americans have loved rice since early days

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United States. Ninety percent of the rice consumed in the U.S. is produced within its borders, most of it grown in the rice belt of the Gulf Coast, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas and California.

The United States is respected worldwide for our abundant production of high quality rice and, in the world market, is one of the largest exporters of rice. About two-thirds of the U.S. rice crop is exported to more than 100 countries.

DIVERSE CULINARY cultures and differing climatic soil conditions have evolved more than 40,000 different varieties of rice. The major descriptive categories have to do

with the shape (round or oval), width (in India, superline, fine or coarse) and length (long, medium or short), whether the brown (bran) layer under the husk has been removed, and whether it is raw or processed (pre-cooked, converted and so on).

Some rice are even described by their aromatic qualities. The primary difference in these rice are their cooking characteristics, and in some cases, a subtle flavor difference. From the nutritional point of view, they are equal, and indeed can often be interchanged in recipes.

Forms of Rice

- Regular-milled white rice
- Parboiled rice
- Pre-cooked rice
- Brown rice

Wild rice, a dark-brown native American grain, is not rice at all but rather a grain shaped like rice. The best wild rice is long, fat and glossy and has a delicate fragrance. During its preparation wild rice will swell and expose the more tender inner meat.

When to use which rice? It is a matter of personal preference because there are no hard, fast rules. Be creative and experiment to see which type you prefer. Choose brown rice in dishes like pilaf, or long grain for paella. Medium grain rice would be an excellent choice for making dishes that have a creamy characteristic, such as risotto, molds, croquettes or desserts. Short grain rice works well in sushi.

New specialty or "aromatic" rice

are showing up in our specialty shops and on supermarket shelves. Brand names include Texmati, an Americanized version of India's long-grained basmati rice. It has a nutty flavor and an aroma like freshly popped corn when it is cooking. Texmati has marketed a "Light Bran," a nutritional and appetizing way to increase fiber intake. "Brown-Long Grain American Basmati" and "Royal Blend," a blend of brown and white basmati rice with wild rice. Phone orders — Farms of Texas 1-800-232-RICE.

ANOTHER GROWER produces Wehani, an earthy, honey-red, basmati-style rice with the scent of hot buttered peanuts as well as a Sweet Wehani, assorted blends of brown, black and red rice. Phone

orders — Lundberg Family Farms, 1-916-882-4551.

As for the grand Wild Pecan, there are no nuts in this long-grain rice. The name comes from its nutty aroma and flavor. From the same mill there is also Artichoke Rice, Cajun Pilaf and Jambalaya Mix. Phone orders Konrigo Wild Pecan Rice, 1-800-551-2245.

And then there's Popcorn Rice (while simmering it smells like popping corn). Phone orders — Community Kitchens 1-800-535-9901.

Arborio, a short-grain rice cooks up creamy. This rice is a staple in Northern Italian restaurants and homes, where it is mixed with stock or wine and other ingredients to create risotto. Imported brands available at specialty stores and supermar-

kets are Arborio, Superfino and Carnaroli.

Rice is important for its nutritional value. It is an excellent source of complex carbohydrates, an important part of the diet. Nutritionists agree, at least half the calories consumed should be from carbohydrates.

Rice is also low in calories. The protein content of rice, while limited, is superior to that provided by other cereal grains. Rice contains only a trace of fat and is cholesterol-free. It is non-alkaline and gluten-free, and is low in sodium and excellent for diets restrictive in these factors.

Rice is wholesome, nutritious food and has qualities which make it ideally suited for special dietary needs.

RISOTTO

5 cups, more or less, chicken stock
4 tablespoons butter
1 large onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, chopped
2 cups Italian rice
6 tablespoons dry white wine
salt and fresh pepper to taste
1/4 teaspoon saffron threads (optional)
8 tablespoons butter, softened
2-4 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Bring the stock to a boil and hold at simmer. In a heavy-bottomed casserole, melt the 4 tablespoons butter. Add the onion and garlic. Cook over medium-high heat for a few minutes until the onion is limp. Reduce the heat to a simmer and add the rice, stirring to coat the rice with butter.

Add the wine. Raise the heat and cook, stirring, until the wine is ab-

sorbed. Add salt and pepper. Dissolve the saffron in a bit of stock and add.

Start adding the stock, a ladleful at a time. Stir with a wooden spatula to keep the rice from sticking. When the stock is absorbed, add another ladleful. Continue adding stock gradually until the rice is cooked. It should have a creamy consistency, but the rice should have a bite to it. The rice mixture should not be dry like a pilaf.

Remove the pan from the heat and add the softened butter and Parmesan cheese. Stir it gently and serve immediately.

Serves 6.
From "Italian Fast and Fresh" by Julie Dannenbaum, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

WILD RICE WITH SNOW PEAS

1 cup wild rice
2 scallions
1 tablespoon butter
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups or more chicken broth (canned if desired)
1/2 pound (1 cup) snow peas
4 large mushrooms
one 4-ounce can water chestnuts, drained
2 tablespoons peanut or salad oil
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup toasted almonds

Wash the rice thoroughly, changing the water several times. Cut the green scallion stems diagonally into 2-inch lengths. Chop the white part of the scallions fine.

Melt the butter in a large saucepan. Add the minced white scallion

and saute until tender. Add the rice, salt and 2 cups chicken broth. Bring to a boil, stir once and reduce the heat. Cover tightly and cook over low heat until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed, about 35 minutes. If necessary add more broth as the rice cooks.

Meanwhile, remove the ends and strings from the peas. Cut the mushrooms and water chestnuts into thin slices.

Heat the oil in a large skillet. Add the scallion stems, peas, mushrooms, water chestnuts and almonds and saute only until mushrooms are tender.

Transfer the cooked rice and vegetable mixture to a casserole. Add salt and pepper to taste and sprinkle with toasted almonds. Mix lightly and keep hot for serving in a very slow oven.
4 servings.

From "The New York Times Cookbook" by Craig Claiborne, Harper & Row, New York, 1961.

STRAWBERRY RICE CREAM PIE

2 cups whipping topping
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup frozen strawberries, thawed and drained, reserve juice
4 tablespoons juice from berries, heated
1 cup cooked rice
1 (9-inch) baked pie shell

Beat cream cheese and sugar until light and fluffy. Meanwhile, dissolve gelatin in heated strawberry juice. Gently stir strawberries into cream cheese mixture. Add dissolved gelatin. Stir in rice. Fold in whipped topping. Turn into pie shell. Chill at least 2 hours.

From "Great Recipes Made Better with... Texmati Rice" pamphlet, Farms of Texas Co., Alvin, Texas

RICE APPLE CRISP

2 cups cooked rice
1 (20-ounce) can sliced apples
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 cup brown sugar, divided
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup chopped pecans

Combine rice, apples, lemon juice, 1/2 cup sugar, cinnamon and salt in buttered baking dish. Mix flour and remaining sugar. Cut in butter until mixture is crumbly. Stir in pecans. Sprinkle over rice mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Serve warm topped with whipped cream. Makes 6 servings.

From "Great Recipes Made Better with... Texmati Rice" pamphlet, Farms of Texas Co., Alvin, Texas

Wholesome recipes in 'Bistro Cooking'

"Bistro Cooking" by Patricia Wells. Workman Publishing, \$22.95 cloth, \$12.95 trade paperback.

If you're keeping track of food trend predictions for the '90s you undoubtedly have read that "back to basics" will prevail.

Down-to-earth, home-style cooking is what food magazines such as Food and Wine and Cook's magazine say will be "in." Whether these predictions will come true is not for me to say. But, I'd like to take their predictions one step further and predict, or at least hope for, some French home-style cooking much like that described in Patricia Wells' new cookbook, "Bistro Cooking."

An authority on French cooking, Wells is also a food writer whom I've read and admired for many years. She writes regularly for the New York Times, Food and Wine, and Travel and Leisure magazines. She presently lives in Paris and has been the restaurant critic for L'Express, a French newsweekly.

"Bistro Cooking" is filled with wholesome, uncomplicated recipes inspired by the small family restaurants of France, known as bistros. If you've not sampled authentic French bistro food, it's not easy to specifically describe. As Wells explains, "The world, I am sure, will never agree upon the exact origins of the word 'bistro.' Whatever its origins, everyone agrees that whether it's a cafe, a small unpretentious restaurant or simply a place to enjoy a glass of wine and a simple yet hearty sandwich, a bistro is a place for good times with friends."

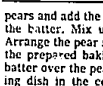
"Bistro Cooking" is more than a cookbook filled with recipes. It contains anecdotes about all the bistro cooks, chefs, bakers, farmers and others who contribute to bistro-style cooking. You probably will want to take it along the next time you visit France and are looking for a great place to eat.

CLAFOUTIS AU POIRE
(PEAR CLAFOUTIS)
1/2 cup pear eau-de-vie or brandy
6 Anjou pears (about 2 pounds)
6 large eggs
1/4 cup vanilla sugar (available in gourmet shops — or use granulated sugar plus 1/4 teaspoon vanilla)
1/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
1/2 cup creme fraiche (available in gourmet shops) or heavy cream
pinch of salt
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar

Pour the pear brandy into a shallow bowl large enough to hold the pears when cut. Peel and core each pear, then cut each into 16 even slices. As they are cut place the pear slices into the bowl. Gently stir to coat each slice with the pear brandy. When all the pears are cut, stir again, cover and let marinate for 1 hour. Turn the pears from time to time, so they do not darken. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Butter and sugar a 10-by-12 inch porcelain baking dish.

Combine the eggs and vanilla sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer beat until frothy. Slowly beat in the flour, cream and salt. Drain the

cook's books
Geri Rinschler



pears and add the marinade liquid to the batter. Mix until well blended. Arrange the pear slices in a spiral in the prepared baking dish. Pour the batter over the pears. Place the baking dish in the center of the oven.

Bake until the batter is firm and the top is golden, about 25 minutes. Remove to a rack to cool, then sprinkle the prepared basting dish. Pour the batter over the pears. Place the baking dish in the center of the oven.

Yield: 8-12 servings.

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CLAFOUTIS AU POIRE
(PEAR CLAFOUTIS)
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