

# RICE

A COMMODITY FACT SHEET COMPILED BY THE LOUISIANA AG IN THE CLASSROOM PROGRAM



## HISTORY

Rice has fed more people over a longer period of time than any other crop. Rice cultivation has been documented as far back as 2800 B.C. Beginning in China, its cultivation spread throughout Sri Lanka and India. It then passed on to Greece and areas of the Mediterranean.

Rice traveled to the New World from Europe. The history of rice in North America began with its colonization. Sir William Berkeley of Virginia first grew rice on a large scale in 1647. It was then successfully introduced into the Carolinas. By the time America gained its independence, rice was one of the country's major agricultural businesses. The Civil War destroyed most of the farms in the east. Rice production then moved westward. At the turn of the 20th century, rice was well established in what are today's major Southern rice growing states – Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Texas. In 1849, the discovery of gold in California brought people of all nations to this U.S. Territory. To feed the many Chinese immigrants whose staple food was rice, California also started its own rice production.

In Louisiana, rice was first introduced in 1718 by French explorers. It wasn't until the 1800s with the coming of the railroad and discoveries made by Dr. Seaman A. Knapp that rice production took off in the state. Settlers moved in, bought land, and put it into rice production.

Technological advances in farm machinery and irrigation pumps made rice farming profitable. By the 1900s, Louisiana produced more than half the rice in the United States. A very special combination of climate and terrain is necessary to produce the high quality rice for which the U.S. is known. This special combination exists in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas and California.

## PRODUCTION

First, rice farmers prepare their soil for planting. Special equipment is used to shift the soil and level and smooth the field. Small levees maintain water on the flooded fields at a uniform depth. Fields are slightly sloped to allow the fields to be drained when needed. Either grain drills or airplanes plant rice in the early spring. Grain drills plant the seed rice directly into the soil at a constant rate and depth. Aerial seeding means planes drop seeds over flooded or dry fields. A good supply of fresh water is extremely important to rice farming. Rice land is covered with two to three inches of water during most of the growing season to inhibit weed growth.

Depending on the variety, rice grows to maturity anywhere from 100 to 180 days after planting. Once the rice is fully mature, the water is drained from the field and combines harvest the rice. This "rough rice" is transported by truck to a rice dryer. Rice dryers are used to remove the moisture from the grain for storage. Once dry, the rice may be safely stored. When rice is harvested, it has a non-edible hull surrounding the kernel.



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TRY THIS ACTIVITY YOURSELF!

# COLORED-RICE MOSAIC



## INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tablespoons rubbing alcohol per color used in your mosaic
- Bowls — one per color
- Food coloring
- 3 cups uncooked rice per color
- Posterboard or cardboard
- Pencil
- White glue

### Coloring Rice

1. Put about 2 tablespoons of rubbing alcohol in a bowl.
2. Add several drops of food coloring (color will lighten as it dries).
3. Add rice and stir until all the rice is colored.
4. Drain. Pour wet rice out on newspaper and spread it out to dry.
5. Once it is completely dry the rice is ready to use (takes about an hour.)
6. Rice can be stored in an airtight container until ready to use.

### Making the Mosaic

1. Using a pencil, draw a design on posterboard or cardboard.
2. Spread an even, thin coat of white glue (no puddles!) over one section of the design at a time. However, you can do more than one area if they are going to be covered with the same color of rice.
3. Sprinkle rice on wet glue, patting it down. Tip the paper to let any excess rice fall off.
4. Follow the same procedure for each color.

### Tips

- This coloring process also works with pasta such as macaroni.  
**NOTE:** Colors may be different because the pasta is not white.
- When coloring rice, add more food coloring if you want it darker.
- Use a toothpick to help move rice around once it has been sprinkled on the glue.
- Let each section dry a bit before dumping off the extra rice and you will lose less from each section.
- Rice can be colored ahead of time and stored in airtight containers.

*Credit: USA Rice Council*

## PRODUCTS

The rough rice that is harvested from the field is the main product. This rough rice undergoes a milling process to remove the hull. Once the hull is removed, the kernels may be processed into many forms. Brown rice has only the hull removed. It still has the bran layers on it. The bran layers are rich in minerals and vitamins. Parboiled rice is rice that has been soaked, steamed, and dried before milling. Consumers who desire fluffy, separate cooked rice favor parboiled rice. Pre-cooked rice is rice that has been cooked and dehydrated after milling. This reduces the cooking time. Regular-milled white rice has gone through the entire milling process. The hulls, bran layers, and germ have all been removed and the rice is sorted according to size.

## BY-PRODUCTS

There are many secondary products we get from rice. Rice hulls are used in the manufacture of many products such as soaps and some synthetic materials. Rice oil is extracted from

the rice bran and is very high quality cooking oil that is cholesterol free. Rice polish, which is produced in the final stages of the milling process and is in high demand as a livestock feed. Rice flour is milled rice that is ground in flour. This flour is used for baking. Brewers rice is the smallest size of broken rice fragments. It is used to make pet foods, and as a carbohydrate source in brewing. Rice bran is rich in protein and natural B vitamins and is used as cattle feed and in the manufacture of vitamin concentrate.

## NUTRITION

Rice is important for its nutritional value. It is an excellent source of complex carbohydrates, an important part of the diet. Rice is also low in calories. A half-cup serving of cooked rice supplies only 82 calories. Rice only contains a trace amount of fat and is cholesterol and sodium free. It is also non-allergenic and gluten-free, making it an excellent choice for those on restrictive diets.