

What You Should Know About Wild Rice

Minnesota cultivated wild rice puts a clever spin on everyday food. Discover the versatility, affordability, and most importantly, the healthy benefits of this wholesome gourmet grain.

Nutritionally speaking, Minnesota cultivated wild rice is hard to beat. It contains no fat, sugar, or cholesterol while providing an excellent source of dietary fiber, potassium, and protein.

Here are some often Asked Questions about wild rice.

Does the volume of wild rice increase when cooked? 1 cup uncooked wild rice equals approximately 3-4 cups cooked wild rice — that's 6 to 8 servings from just one cup uncooked wild rice!

Is wild rice expensive? At \$5 per pound, it's only about 23 cents per serving!

How long can I keep wild rice? Uncooked wild rice keeps up to 10 years in an air-tight container. Cooked wild rice (plain) keeps 1 week refrigerated. Drain well; store in air-tight container.

How do I prepare wild rice? Wild rice is easy to prepare! Add 1 cup uncooked cultivated wild rice to 3-4 cups boiling water. Return to boil; stir. Cover and simmer approximately 30-45 minutes or until kernels just start to open. Drain any excess liquid.

After cooking with wild rice you will define your preferred cook time and water content — texture of cooked wild rice is a personal preference. For a chewier texture, cook for less time. For a tender, fluffier texture, cook longer.

Can I freeze wild rice? Absolutely — cooking and freezing ahead of time turns wild rice into

a convenience food! Plain will keep about 6 months in your freezer. Drain well; store in airtight containers. To use, thaw in refrigerator overnight, or microwave on "defrost" setting a few minutes.

Can I use wild rice in sweetened recipes? Wild rice has a tendency to revert back to hard kernels when combined with sweeteners. Over-cooking and chopping wild rice helps prevent this from happening. Sweetened recipes are best when served within 24 hours.

Is wild rice nutritious? Yes, wild rice is nutritious! It's a high-fiber complex carbohydrate, high in quality protein and low in fat, with only 114 calories per half-cup serving.

Here is a recipe using wild rice.

WILD RICE GUMBO

- ½ cup flour
- 2 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 pound beef polska kielbasa, cut into bite-sized chunks
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, sliced
- 2 bell peppers (assorted color), chopped
- 4 scallions, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cans (14 ounces each) chicken broth
- 1 can (14 ounces) beef broth
- 1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 cups cooked wild rice
- 1 pound small raw shrimp, peeled (approximately 50)
- 1 tablespoon file powder (optional)
- salt and pepper, to taste

1-2 teaspoons hot pepper sauce (optional)

Preheat large skillet over medium heat 2 minutes. Add flour; stir constantly until dark beige (approximately 5 minutes — don't scorch). Immediately transfer to plate. In a large saucepan, cook bacon until starting to crisp; add kielbasa, onion, celery, peppers, scallions, and garlic. Cover; cook 5 minutes. Uncover.

Cook, stirring occasionally until vegetables are lightly browned; stir in flour. Gradually stir in broth; add tomatoes, parsley, Cajun seasoning, and bay leaves.

Partially cover; simmer 40 minutes. Add wild rice, shrimp, and file powder; simmer 10 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and hot pepper sauce. Remove bay leaves before serving. Makes 8-10 servings.

For additional wild rice soup recipes, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council, Attn: Soup-er Wild Rice Recipes, 4630 Churchill Street, Suite #1, St. Paul, MN 55126.

Pie Contest

WASHINGTON (Washington Co.) — As part of Ag Days At The Washington Mall, the Washington County Cattleman's Association will again sponsor the Old-Fashioned Apple Pie Contest on March 22.

The contest will feature a junior division (up to 21 years of age) and a senior division (22+ years of age). It is recommended that the pies be in a non-returnable glass pie plate.

Judges will be judging the pies to be auctioned to raise money for the Advanced Education Support Grant. The grant is designed to help defray expenses for post-secondary education. Three junior members of the Washington County Cattleman's Association were awarded scholarships at the annual banquet in October. The proceeds from the pie auction represent the main funding source for the scholarship. The WCCA is proud of its scholarship program and the juniors who have been honored by it.

Pie entries will be received at the Washington County Cattleman's booth located in the center of the Washington Mall from noon to 2 p.m., Saturday, March 22. Judging will begin promptly at 2 p.m.

Consuming Thoughts

by

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Most experts agree that increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables may help prevent cancer, heart disease, and other chronic disease, yet most Americans don't even eat the recommended minimum five servings a day.

Here are seven tips for eating more fruits and vegetables:

1. Start your day with at least two fruits, in addition to whole-grain bread, cereal or some other form of grain. Try citrus fruit or juice and perhaps a banana or some cantaloupe, mango or apple. Eat prunes and raisins for variety.

2. When planning meals, think of vegetables and starches as a main dish instead of the poultry or meat. For those meat, potato or rice and green vegetable meals, add a salad and another cooked vegetable and cut back on the meat.

3. Don't overlook cooked fruits. Try making a fruit compote with apples, peaches or pears, adding some apple juice and some cinnamon for flavor and some honey or sugar to taste. Serve with a low-fat or nonfat yogurt or use as a topping for a frozen dessert or breakfast cereal.

4. Eat fruits and veggies as snacks. Always keep carrots, peppers, broccoli, cherry tomatoes and fruit on hand. Buy or make nonfat dips.

5. Keep staples on hand, like canned kidney beans, chickpeas and other legumes to salads, pasta sauces and stews. Stock the refrigerator with peeled baby carrots and other ready to eat produce.

6. Eat more cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and kale, which are high in vitamins

and minerals and other anticancer substances. Try pre-cut cabbage for homemade cole slaw or steam it for a side dish. Add these vegetables to soups, pureed, if you like. Add these vegetables to salads and stir fry meals.

7. Look for other ways to add fruits and vegetables to recipes. Leftover veggies are great for topping a baked potato. Add grated carrot to tuna salad or gelatin salads. Sliced oranges or grapefruit are great with salad greens, especially in the winter when tomatoes are not at their best. Tomatoes, topped with bread crumbs and a little cheese, can be baked along with fish. Save small quantities of leftover vegetables in a container in the freezer and add to soups and stews for economy and extra nutrients and fiber.

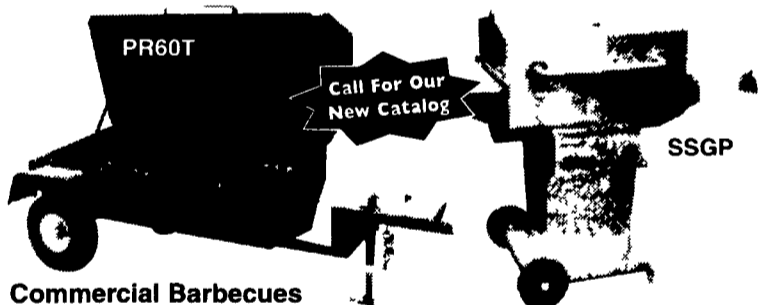
Here's a great recipe that combines fruit and grains.

SPINACH STRAWBERRY SALAD

- Sesame seeds (about 1 tablespoon)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ cup salad oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 bunch spinach, cleaned, stemmed
- Minced garlic to taste
- 1 cup strawberries, sliced or chunked
- Dry mustard to taste
- 1½ teaspoons fresh dill or ½ teaspoon dried dill; Toast sesame seeds in dry skillet or hot oven several minutes, tossing often; let cool. Combine sugar, vinegar and garlic, dry mustard, salt and pepper. Whisk in oil in thin stream. Toss with spinach, strawberries, dill, and sesame seeds. Four serving.

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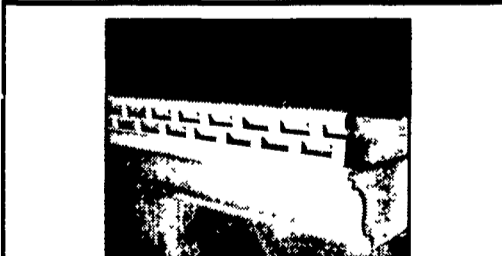
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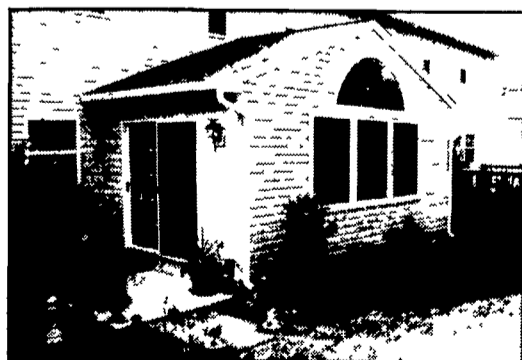
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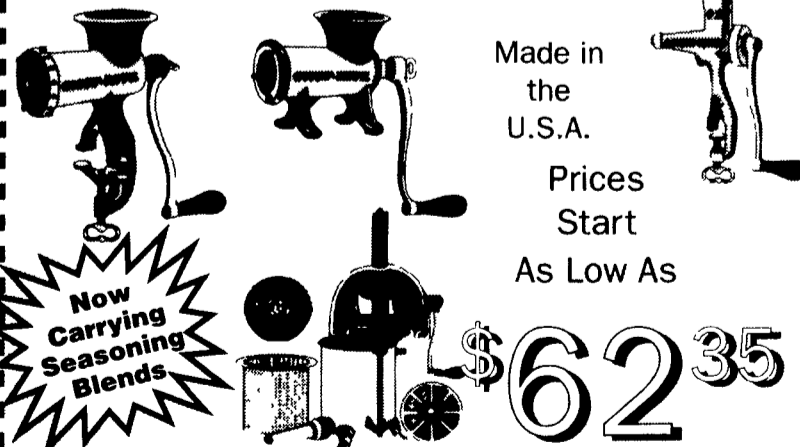
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