

QUICK CHANGE ARTIST - RICE

Rice has been a staple food to millions for centuries. Yet its appetite appeal is just as strong as ever, because it's a quick-change artist. Served as the breakfast cereal or as the mainstay, with curried chicken for example, at a buffet dinner, it takes menu honors. In a word, rice is versatile.

This Jack-of-all-trades cereal has been designated by the United States Department of Agriculture as the Plentiful-Food-to-Feature during the week March 17-23, which makes it a good buy.

According to the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, there are more than 7,000 known rice varieties throughout the world, but American homemakers prefer only about a dozen of the finest long, medium, and short grain ones. They are obtainable at—

Regular white milled rice, which has been dehulled, washed, cleaned, rubbed or polished, and graded in milling. It makes up the bulk of U.S. sales, since it is the most easily stored and is the most stable.

Parboiled rice. Unhulled rice is steam-pressure processed before milling to drive soluble vitamins and minerals into the kernel. Grains remain fluffy, separate, and plump after cooking. Parboiled rice takes longer cooking and more liquid than regular rice—possible disadvantages today when fast-cooking foods are in demand.

Enriched rice. Regular rice is enhanced with vitamins and minerals, to return the food nutrients lost in processing.

Brown rice, a whole, unpolished grain with only the outer, inedible fibrous hull removed. Brown rice retains all minerals and vitamins but requires more liquid and longer cooking. Its nutlike flavor appeals to many. Because of the oil content of the bran layer, it is not as stable as the regular.

COOKING TIPS

Select a large cooking kettle, add plenty of water, some salt, and bring to boiling. Add regular rice slowly. Cook until just done, 20 to 25 minutes, without stirring. Remove cooked rice from kettle within 10 minutes after it is done, to prevent packing and sticking. Drain. Pile on plate or serving dish, fluffing with a fork.

For Oriental-style rice: After draining, pile into a lightly greased baking dish and heat in oven, 325 degrees F., for about 10 minutes.

Caramel Sponge

1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup boiling water
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon unflavored gelatin
2 egg yolks, slightly beaten
1/2 cups milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 egg whites
2 tablespoons sugar
Slightly sweetened whipped cream

Measure 1/2 cup sugar into a heavy skillet or saucepan and stir over low heat until sugar melts and turns amber color. Add boiling water gradually, stirring constantly and heat until caramel dissolves. Cool. Combine 1/4 cup sugar, salt, gelatin, egg yolks and milk. Slowly stir in caramel sirup and cook over low heat until mixture coats a metal spoon. Cool quickly, then chill until mixture begins to thicken. Beat egg whites until frothy throughout, then add 2 tablespoons sugar, a tablespoon at a time and continue to beat until stiff. Fold through gelatin mixture and pile into individual molds or pudding dishes. Chill until firm. Unmold and serve with a garnish of slightly sweetened whipped cream. Makes 6 servings.

FRUIT COMPOTE

A tasty fruit appetizer or light dessert is a fruit compote. Put syrup drained from canned figs and two cinnamon sticks in a saucepan, bring to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes. Peel and section two or three oranges. Mix with figs in bowl. Pour syrup over fruits; chill. For dessert serve topped with a spoonful of whipped cream and a sprinkling of toasted slivered almonds.

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