

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Going for the Brown - Rice

With all the emphasis these days on eating a wide variety of colored fruits and vegetables, it can be easy to forget about getting our browns. After all, we have bright red gorgeous local strawberries and tomatoes, glossy green peppers, yellow squash, the tail end of the season's oranges and grapefruits. With all of those, why worry about brown?

Brown as in whole grains are an important part of a healthy diet. Brown rice might have a few extra benefits that we're only now beginning to recognize. Brown rice is whole grain rice. The hull, the germ that will become the new plant, and the starch are all there. To make white rice the outer and inner hulls and the germ are polished away, leaving only the plain white starch. We've understood that since we started polishing rice, when people decided that white rice was prettier or tasted better.

Now however we're learning more about what we've been throwing away, as well as what's still there. The outer layer of the hull is not edible. When only that is removed we still have brown rice because the inner hull is still there. This hull is made of waxy fiber. It's the reason old fashioned brown rice took forever to cook. It took an hour or more for water to get through that fiber to cook the starch inside.

But that fiber has a lot of good health benefits for us. Fiber makes it harder for our stomach to digest the starch. That's good, because the more slowly the starch is changed into sugar the less of a rise it causes in our blood sugar.

Besides fiber rice also has several kinds of starch that are harder for us to digest than wheat or corn starch. These starches are called 'resistant' starch and 'slowly digesting starch'. These too help to keep our blood sugar from rising so fast. Some kinds of resistant starches help the good bacteria in our intestines to grow better. That's good because when we have plenty of the good guys there's less of a chance for the bad ones to grow.

When we polish off the hull and the germ we lose a lot of other nutrients too. Brown rice has 15 vitamins or minerals. These include most of the B vitamins. The B's are part of the system that changes our food into energy. Without them we'd be pretty tired all the time. B vitamins are involved in many, many other operations in our body too. Brown rice also has significant amounts of potassium and magnesium. These are two of the minerals that help to counteract the effects of salt on our blood pressure. Along with calcium they help bring blood pressure down. Brown rice has selenium, the mineral that helps protect us from mercury. It is necessary for every cell in our brain and nervous system to work quickly and correctly. Brown rice even has a little bit of iron, the mineral that keeps our blood bright red and carrying oxygen to our muscles. That's a lot of good stuff in some small brown grains.

Also connected to the hull and germ of brown rice are a whole variety of phytonutrients such as antioxidants, phytosterols, tocopherols and others. They're big names that do big jobs. These are the things that help protect us from heart disease, cancers, Alzheimer's and many other illnesses. We lose them when we polish rice.

We can also look at what rice does not have. Rice is naturally and completely free of cholesterol, gluten and very, very low in sodium. And now that we have 'instant'

brown rice we can cook it in 10 minutes, just like the plain starch white rice. The time's not an excuse for not making brown rice now.

Brown rice does have a slightly nutty flavor if you eat it plain. But it's great at absorbing the flavors of any sauce you put with it. You can cook brown rice in soups or stews, use it in casseroles or salads, add cooked brown rice to pancake or muffin batter, even make rice pudding with it. Give it a try today!

Here's an easy brown rice pilaf. With all the other flavors no will notice all the extra nutrients from the brown rice.

Brown Rice Pilaf

1 20-oz can tomatoes	2 Tbsp margarine
½ cup chopped onion	2 tsp lemon juice
½ cup chopped celery	1 C 'instant' brown rice
2 Tbsp ketchup	2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1 pound chopped cooked chicken or cooked shrimp	

Combine tomatoes, onion and celery in large saucepan. Boil, covered, over low heat 15 minutes, stirring once or twice. Add all other ingredients except chicken or shrimp. Stir well, cover and simmer 10 minutes more. Stir in chicken or shrimp, cover and cook until heated through and all liquid is absorbed. Serves 4.