



**GRILLED CHICKEN ROLLS
WITH SPICED MANGO RICE**

YIELD: 12 chicken rolls*

INGREDIENTS

Chicken breasts, boneless, skinless—12
Salt—to taste
Pepper—to taste
Packaged brown and wild rice mix
—6 cups
Mangos, ripe but firm*—6 large
Onion, green—½ cup
Pistachios, shelled—1 cup
Cranberries, dried—½ cup
Cinnamon—¼ tsp.
Allspice—¼ tsp.

DIRECTIONS

1. Flatten the chicken breasts. Peel, pit and dice the mangos. Thinly slice the green onion. Roast and salt the pistachios.
2. Season the chicken with salt and pepper; reserve. Prepare the rice according to the package instructions.
3. Stir together the rice, mango, onion, pistachios, cranberries, cinnamon and allspice. Place about ⅓ cup of the rice mixture in the center of each chicken breast. Transfer the remaining rice mixture to a steamtable pan, cover and heat for service. Fold over the ends and sides of the chicken breast to enclose the rice mixture; tie to secure.
4. For each serving: Grill over medium-high heat until cooked through, 5-8 minutes, turning to brown all sides. Serve each roll with an additional ⅔ cup of the hot rice mixture.

Photo and recipe: National Mango Board, www.mango.org

* Notes: If this item passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation and conduct a nutrient analysis. A 9-count mango weighs about 18 ozs. and yields approximately 11 ozs. of usable fruit. One cup of ⅜-*in.* diced mango weighs 6.35 ozs.

BY SHAILY JARIWALA

Get Rice! to It!

Earn high marks from students as you explore new ways to incorporate this flavorful, versatile menu staple.

With all eyes on school nutrition programs, K-12 operators work every day to ensure that they are delivering menus that help to predict a healthier future for children. It's no secret that getting kids to choose nutritious foods can be a challenge, but many school nutrition professionals are finding that some of the global cuisines that more and more students are eagerly embracing are key to healthier diets.

BERRY BANANA BREAKFAST RICE

YIELD: 12 servings (3 qts.)*

INGREDIENTS

Rice, white, long-grain, cooked*—2 ½ qts.

Milk, reduced-fat*—1 ½ qts.

Brown sugar, divided*—1 cup

Cinnamon, ground—1 Tbsp.

Salt—1 tsp.

Blueberries*—3 cups

Bananas*—3 cups

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large, heavy pot, mix together the rice, milk, ¾ cup brown sugar, cinnamon and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until the mixture is thickened.

2. Remove the rice mixture from the heat and pour into a full-size steamtable pan. Keep warm until ready to serve. If the mixture gets too thick, add more hot milk or water to adjust the consistency.

3. Slice the bananas.

4. For each serving: Serve 1 cup of the rice mixture (with a #8 scoop) into a bowl and top with ¼ cup each fresh blueberries and sliced bananas. Sprinkle with 1 tsp. brown sugar.

Photo: Provo City (Utah) School District Child Nutrition Services, <http://tinyurl.com/bsco3q6>

Recipe: USA Rice Federation, www.menurice.com

***Notes:** If this item passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation and conduct a nutrient analysis. Brown rice can be used in place of white rice, but increase the quantity of the milk to 2 qts. and simmer the mixture for 25-30 minutes. Other items that could be used as toppings include other fresh fruits, yogurt, toasted nuts, toasted coconut, maple syrup, honey, etc.



As kids' palates evolve, so do their expectations for more diverse and ethnic options—and menu planners are responding by using rice to create flavorful and nutritious meals that students will favor. USA Rice Federation research shows that Mexican and Asian cuisines are the most popular ethnic-inspired cafeteria items, but other top cuisines of choice include Mediterranean and Italian flavors. But it takes more than an understanding of the latest research and trends to create rice dishes that really rock! If you're seeking to learn more about how to purchase, cook and store this versatile grain, this article is designed to provide you with a helpful rice primer.

First, though, let's meet a few K-12 trailblazers who are demonstrating innovative ways to serve rice and allow it to become a key part of their students' eating habits. By offering rice in such a broad array of dishes, these operators are helping to engage and empower kids to make more balanced meal decisions.

What's on the Menu?

New menu item acceptance from students starts with how the food looks. Many school nutrition professionals have confirmed the tried-and-true adage that "kids eat with their eyes." That's only the first step, though. Not only does it have to look appetizing, it has to deliver the flavor. You're likely interested in beefing up the rice options on your menu in light of the new meal pattern regulation, so consider trying one—or more!—of the following well-received rice-based menu options to encourage students to connect with good food choices.

Rice Bowls. Rice bowls continue to offer a unique and easy method for dishing up customized meals that are packed with whole grains, vegetables, lean proteins, fruit and flavor. "Introducing new flavors with rice bowls was such a success that we increased school lunch participation by nearly 24%," credits Cynthia Ruffin, child nutrition director for St. Charles Parish (La.) Public Schools. "The students liked our rice bowl bar so much that we are planning to feature it regularly." Ruffin's "Build-A-Bowl" concept was developed by Tulane University dietetic interns working at St. Charles Parish's Destrehan High School and regularly includes such Asian favorites as Sweet and Spicy Chicken Rice Bowls, Thai Curry Rice Bowls and California Sushi Rice Bowls.

[Editors' Note: The USA Rice Federation is once again sponsoring its annual rice bowls contest for K-12 school nutrition professionals. Details were not available at press time, but will be highlighted in a future issue of School Nutrition's "Enter to Win" column and at www.menurice.com.]

KITCHEN WISDOM SAYS . . .

- This dish can be merchandised with raspberries for more color appeal.
- As a variation, stir in about 2 cups of dried fruit bits into the rice, then top the dish with blueberries and/or strawberries. These may be more desirable fruits to use, as bananas sliced in advance can brown quickly and look less appealing once the dish is served on the line.

Wisdom
says . . . Try This!**CHICKEN RICE BOWL**

YIELD: 10 servings*

PER SERVING: 364 cal., 22 g pro., 39 g carb., 6 g fiber, 52 mg chol., 865 mg sod.

SZECHUAN SAUCE INGREDIENTSSoy sauce, low-sodium— $\frac{1}{4}$ cupGarlic— $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

Sugar—2 Tbsps.

Sesame or olive oil—2 Tbsps.

Chicken base—1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsps.Chile paste— $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

Cornstarch—1 tsp.

Hot water—1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups**RICE BOWL INGREDIENTS**Chicken—3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups

Rice, brown—5 cups

Broccoli*—5 cups

Carrot coins*—2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cupsPeas*—2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups

Cilantro*—3 Tbsps. + 1 tsp.

Scallions*—3 Tbsps. + 1 tsp.

Peppers, red*—2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups**DIRECTIONS**

1. To prepare the sauce: Mince the garlic. Combine the soy sauce, garlic, sugar, sesame or olive oil, chicken base, chile paste and cornstarch in a sauce pan and stir until the cornstarch is blended in.

2. Add the hot water and simmer for 10 minutes.

3. To prepare the rice bowl: Dice the chicken. Cook the rice. Steam the broccoli, carrot coins and peas. Chop the cilantro and scallions. Dice the red peppers. Cook the vegetables *al dente*.

4. Combine the chicken with the simmering sauce. Cook until heated to 165°F.

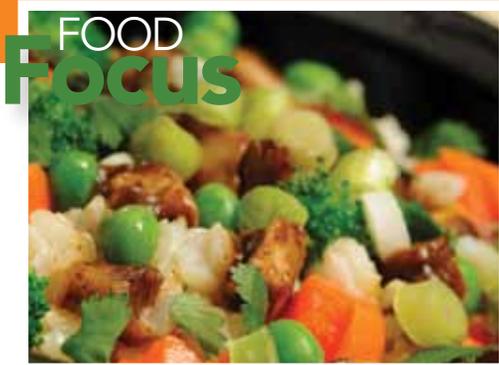
5. For each serving: Place $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of rice in a bowl and top with $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the chicken mixture. Recommendation: Top with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of broccoli, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of carrot coins, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of peas, 1 tsp. of cilantro, 1 tsp. of scallions and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of red peppers.*

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: St. Paul Public Schools Nutrition Services, <http://ns.spps.org/menuRecipes>

*Notes: If this item passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation. Serving these proportions of vegetables allows for menuing an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ cup serving of vegetables as a side to help meet the new meal pattern requirement, according to one Kitchen Wisdom panelist.

KITCHEN WISDOM SAYS . . .

- One-quarter cup tomato paste plus 1 Tbsp. crushed red pepper can be used in place of the chile paste. Green onions can be used in place of scallions. Zucchini squash can be used in place of peas.
- Frozen diced grilled chicken can be used. The recipe also lends itself well to commodity chicken fajita strips or other dark meats.
- Cilantro can be added or removed based on students' taste preferences. Add 2 Tbsps. of minced fresh ginger (or $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. powdered ginger) for a flavor boost, if desired.
- We served this dish in a pagoda pail with a fortune cookie, and the students loved it.
- Less chile paste and a bit more chicken base resulted in a less spicy taste for middle school students.
- For a thicker, more binding sauce, add 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ times more cornstarch for a total of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsps. The sauce can be made a day ahead, especially if using dried crushed red pepper flakes. The chicken and sauce can be heated separately the next day, then combined.



Breakfast. A long-time tradition in the South, wholesome, rice-based breakfast options are becoming popular across the country and offer a new way to increase consumption of whole grains and fruit. Erin Thacker, SNS, nutrition and wellness educator for Chesapeake (Va.) Public Schools, and Renee Swank, school nutrition manager at Chesapeake's Crestwood Intermediate School, incorporated rice into their breakfast menus with a Country Breakfast Rice Cereal Bowl. The new option met with significant student acceptance, creating a new alternative to more conventional oatmeal and cold cereal choices.

"This breakfast bowl is a great way to start off your day," notes Thacker. "The combination of rice, raisins, butter and cinnamon creates a healthy meal that the students love. The rice is fluffy and flavorful in your mouth, and the cinnamon brings out the wonderful flavor of the warm raisins!"

Rice Salads. These can stand alone as satisfying entrées, work as flavorful side dishes or serve as a filling for wraps. Rice salads also store well, can be eaten warm or cold and are particularly excellent options for finding a use for extra or leftover rice. Dawn Ramsey, foodservice director for Baltimore's Park School, serves rice-based menu items at least twice per week and includes wild, brown, jasmine, basmati, arborio and other U.S. aromatic types on the menu. Popular concepts include her Whole-Grain Rice Challenge Extravaganza, featuring whole-grain rice salads like Wild Rice Salad With Celery and Walnuts and a Brown Rice Salad With Herbs, Diced Apples and Fresh Blueberries.

"We often use brown rice and wild rice for greater whole-grain nutritional



CHICKEN ENCHILADA VERDE AND BROWN RICE CASSEROLE

YIELD: 12 servings*

INGREDIENTS

Sour cream, reduced-fat, divided—2 cups
 Cream of chicken soup, reduced-sodium, condensed—1 ½ cups
 Milk, lowfat—1 cup
 Salt—½ tsp.
 Pepper, black, ground—½ tsp.
 Cumin, ground—½ tsp.
 Chicken meat—1 ¼ lbs.
 Scallions—½ cup
 Tortillas, corn, 6-in.—12
 Rice, brown—1 qt.
 Jalapeño Jack, lowfat, shredded, divided*—12 ozs.
 Chili sauce, green (salsa verde)*—1 cup
 Cooking spray—as needed

DIRECTIONS

1. Toast the cumin. Cook and shred the chicken. Chop the scallions. Cook the rice.
2. Preheat the oven to 375°F (conventional) or 325°F (convection).
3. In a bowl, whisk together 1 cup of sour cream, the soup, milk, salt, pepper and cumin until smooth.
4. Stir in the chicken and scallions until mixed.
5. Spray the bottom of a half-size steamtable pan with cooking spray. In the bottom of the pan, lay out four tortillas. Spread 2 cups of rice evenly over the top of the tortillas. Spoon half of the creamy chicken mixture evenly over the rice and sprinkle with 6 ozs. (1 ½ cups) of cheese. Repeat this layering with four more tortillas, the remaining 2 cups of rice, the remaining chicken mixture

and the remaining cheese. Top with the remaining four tortillas and spread the reserved 1 cup of sour cream evenly over the top layer of the tortillas, followed with a layer of the green chili sauce to cover.

6. Cover with foil and bake 35-40 minutes or until heated through and bubbling. Let stand 10 minutes before serving. Portion approximately 1 cup spoodle per serving. If desired, serve with additional green chili sauce and sour cream.

Recipe: USA Rice Federation, www.menurice.com

***Notes:** If this item passes the test with a small group of students, adjust the quantities for batch preparation and conduct a nutrient analysis. Mild Cheddar cheese can be substituted for the Jalapeño Jack cheese. Tomatilla sauce, red enchilada sauce or other salsas can be substituted for the salsa verde.

benefit,” Ramsey explains. “Featuring different kinds of rice in a variety of healthy dishes is an integral part of our nutrition agenda.” Additionally, Ramsey incorporates several methods for getting students to try new foods. These range from “Tasty Tuesday” demonstrations and tastings to the color-coded *Create Your Plate Healthy* guide that helps students put together a balanced meal using the MyPlate guidance.

Purchasing, Storing, Preparing, Oh My!

So far, we’ve seen how rice is an ideal flavor carrier for both traditional and global cuisines, making it a staple ingredient in a variety of dishes that kids have come to love. Now, let’s move to the back of the house. As rice continues to become central to developing nutritious and flavorful school meals, this “how-to” guide to purchasing, storing and preparing rice will help identify the most effective ways to meet multiple school nutrition needs in the kitchen.

Purchasing. A wide variety of rice is available through state commodity programs, and commodity codes can be easier to decipher than you think. Let’s use “B521, Rice M50” as an example. First, don’t try to decipher the first half of the code. Those are letters and numbers assigned to specific products. But the second half has information you’ll want to know for your order. “L,” “M” and “S” stand for, respectively, “long-,” “medium-” and



TROPICAL FRUIT RICE SALAD

YIELD: 40 servings

PER SERVING: 166 cal., 3 g pro., 37 g carb., 2 g fiber, 0 g fat, 0 g sat. fat, 1 mg chol., 312 mg sod.

INGREDIENTS

Rice, white or brown, long-grain—7 lbs., 4 ozs. or 1 gal., 1 qt.
 Tropical fruit salad—6 lbs., 10 ozs. or 1 #10 can
 Cucumbers—3 or 1 ½ lbs.
 Bell pepper, red, yellow or green—1 or 8 ozs.
 Onions, green—4 ozs. or 1 ¾ cups
 Lemon peel—1 Tbsp.
 Salad dressing, fat-free or Italian—1 ¾ lbs. or 3 ½ cups

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the rice. Drain the fruit salad. Chop the cucumbers and green onions. Finely chop the green peppers. Grate the lemon peel.
2. Combine the rice, tropical fruit salad, cucumbers, bell pepper, green onions and lemon peel in a large bowl.
3. Pour the Italian dressing over the salad. Toss to coat evenly.
4. Portion into 1 cup servings.

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: Dole Food Company, Inc., www.dole.com

“short-grain” rice. “B” is for brown rice. “WGR” means a whole-grain rice product. The number after the letter indicates the pack size. So, Code “B521, Rice M 50” means you will receive medium-grain rice in a 50-pound bag. Jasmine, wild rice and other specialty varieties are *not* available as commodities and need to be purchased commercially using a specific manufacturer’s code.

Storing. Taking proper precautions for storing rice increases its shelf life and helps to reduce food costs and waste. Following are some best practices for storing dry and cooked rice.

- Uncooked rice should be stored in a cool, dry place in a tightly sealed, water-proof container to prevent absorption of moisture and aromas from other foods.
- When stored properly, dry, white rice will last almost indefinitely. For best quality, rotate your rice supply on a regular basis.

■ Dry whole-grain brown rice has a shelf life of about six months. Keep whole-grain rice in a refrigerator to extend the shelf life to one year.

■ Hold hot rice for service in a steamtable above 140°F (60°C).

■ To store cooked rice, cool the hot rice as quickly as possible by transferring it to a shallow pan. Cool rice to 70°F (21°C) within two hours and then to 40°F (4°C) within the next four hours.

■ Always wrap and date containers of cooked rice prior to storing in the refrigerator.

TOASTED HAM AND BROCCOLI CHEDDAR RICE MELT

YIELD: 38 servings
PER SERVING: 242 cal., 15 g pro., 32 g carb., 4 g fiber, 6 g fat, 2 g sat. fat, 14 mg chol., 454 mg sod.

INGREDIENTS

Water—1 ¾ qts.
 Packaged brown rice mix, with broccoli and cheddar flavoring—25 ½ ozs.
 Tortillas, flour, 8-in.*—38
 Ham, deli-sliced—28 ½ ozs.
 Broccoli—30 ozs.
 Cheddar cheese, reduced-fat, shredded—14 ¼ ozs.
 Non-stick cooking spray—as needed



DIRECTIONS

1. Chop the broccoli. Steam the tortillas and broccoli separately. Keep warm until assembly. Heat the water to 190°F.
2. Combine the hot water and the contents of the broccoli/cheddar seasoning packet from the packaged rice in a deep, full-size steamtable pan. Stir well to disperse the seasoning in the water. Add the rice and mix well.
3. Cover and bake in a preheated 400°F conventional oven for 25 minutes or until the rice has absorbed most of the seasoned water.
4. Stir the rice well; keep warm. Fluff with a fork prior to portioning to obtain the maximum yield.
5. Place the warm tortillas on a flat work surface. Working in small batches, portion ⅓ cup warm rice (No. 12 scoop) on each tortilla. Spread the rice down the center of each tortilla evenly.
6. Top each tortilla with ¾-oz. slice of ham, ¼ cup steamed broccoli and 1 ½ Tbsps. cheese.
7. Fold the sides of each tortilla inward and roll tightly, enclosing the fillings, burrito-style.
8. Transfer the filled tortillas, seam-side down to a steamtable pan. Arrange just one layer; use as many pans as necessary. Spray the tops of the tortilla wraps lightly with non-stick cooking spray. For a toasted, panini-type effect, stack additional, empty steamtable pans of the same size on top of each wrap-filled pan, ensuring the bottom of the top pan is in contact with the wraps. Bake in a preheated 400°F conventional oven for 20 minutes. (For a more golden brown color, preheat the top steamtable pans and bake an additional 10 minutes.) Serve warm.

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: MARS Foodservices, www.marsfoodservices.com

*Notes: Uncle Ben’s® Broccoli and Cheddar Brown Rice may be used for this recipe. For decreased labor, eliminate the oven toasting procedure and menu as a Ham and Broccoli Cheddar Rice Wrap. To prepare, build the wraps with the warm ingredients and serve immediately. Whole-wheat or whole-grain tortillas can be used in place of flour tortillas. Eliminate the ham for a meatless option.

What Types of Rice Rate?

According to a 2011 USA Rice Federation survey of K-12 school nutrition operators, following are the brown rice-based dishes most frequently found on school menus:

- Plain, cooked rice (44%)
- Rice bowls (37%)
- Spanish or Mexican rice (36%)
- Fried rice (26%)
- Stir fry (24%)
- Burritos/tacos (24%)

For more information and recipe ideas, visit www.MenuRice.com.



■ Cooked rice can be stored in the refrigerator in a tightly covered container for up to three days.

Preparing. There are three particularly popular methods for cooking rice in K-12 operations, according to K-12 operators. More than half of school nutrition programs use ovens to *bake* rice. Note that the calibration of the oven can change the cooking time for baked rice; check the calibration of your oven thermostat regularly, and adjust accordingly. **TIP:** You can add boiling water to dry rice to bring the cooking temperature up quickly and speed cooking.

Simmering and steaming methods are often referred to interchangeably. The characteristics of “steamed rice” change with the type of rice. Steamed long-grain rice tends to be tender and fluffy with separate grains, while steamed short- and medium-grain rice also is tender, but moist and sticky. Note that gentle simmering ensures that rice will absorb liquid evenly and that kernels will remain intact. **TIP:** To retain the desired moist, clingy texture of medium- or short-grain rice, do *not* fluff with a fork.

Boiling rice produces tender grains that are completely separate and *not* sticky. The method can be preferred when rice is going to be added to soups and salads. **TIPS:** Use a large amount of lightly salted water (about one gallon of water for each pound of rice). Bring the water to a vigorous boil before adding the rice. Vigorous movement keeps the grains of rice from sticking together. Cooked rice may be used immediately or rinsed with cold water to cool for later use.

Electric *rice cookers* are becoming increasingly popular in school kitchens for preparing steamed rice. Rice cookers are easy to use and require no tending, producing perfect rice every time. The cooker employs a thermostat sensor to cook rice for the proper amount of time, automatically.

The most common *liquids for cooking rice* are water or stock (chicken, beef, seafood and vegetable). Using stock typically results in a richer-tasting finished



BONUS WEB CONTENT

For more rice-related guidance, visit www.schoolnutrition.org/snmagazinebonuscontent for additional web-only content, including a detailed chart of rice bowl ideas from the USA Rice Federation and menuing suggestions from previous winners of the USA Rice Federation’s Healthy Rice Bowls contest for school nutrition professionals.

product that may be desirable for specific recipes or when pairing rice with other foods. Water produces a mild-tasting rice that is a versatile flavor carrier and can be paired with virtually any food.

Keep in mind that dry rice typically triples in volume during cooking. Thus,

- 1 cup dry rice = 3 cups cooked rice.
- 1 qt. dry rice = 3 qts. cooked rice.

Dry rice also more than doubles in weight during cooking, making rice dishes an excellent choice for helping to manage food costs.

Note that cooking methods and times *can* change when working with specialty rices, such as jasmine or wild rice. Be sure to follow specific package and/or recipe instructions.

Rice may be reheated on top of the stove, in an oven or in a commercial steamer. Smaller quantities of rice can be reheated in a microwave oven. When reheating rice, be sure to add a small amount of liquid and check to see that the rice dish reaches an interior temperature of at least 165°F (74°C).

The Grain’s the Thing

All rice starts off as brown rice. White rice is rice that has been milled, which is a process that removes the bran and germ. Thus, white rice is *not* considered a whole grain. White rice is milled to give grains a finer texture and lengthen their shelf life. Most white rice is *enriched* to add back the nutrients that were lost in processing; these include niacin, thiamin and iron.

Brown rice has the outer hull removed,

but still retains the entire kernel, which includes the bran, the germ and the endosperm. Together, these provide protein, fiber and many important vitamins, minerals and “phytonutrients.” Brown rice, wild rice, red rice and black japonica are examples of whole-grain rice.

Brown rice has grown increasingly popular as the benefits of eating whole grains continue to be touted. *All* brown rice is 100% whole grain and retains its nutrient-dense bran layers, which give brown rice a chewy texture and nut-like flavor that other rice varieties don’t feature.

There are several varieties of rice grown in the United States, including long-, medium- and short-grain white and brown rice, as well as so-called “aromatic varieties” like jasmine and basmati and specialty varieties such as black japonica. The primary differences in these varieties are their cooking characteristics, texture and some flavor variation. The aromatic rices have a subtle flavor distinction and a popcorn-like aroma. USA Rice Federation has conducted taste testing of some of the aromatic varieties with students, and the children made special note of the good smell of the rice! Another successful test involved a blend of whole-grain brown and wild rice.

Adding whole-grain brown rice to the school menu can help you meet the new regulations, the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPlate* recommendations. Both whole-grain brown and enriched white rice are energy-fueling complex carbohydrates that are naturally

low in calories, are sodium-, gluten- and cholesterol-free and have just a trace amount of fat, with no trans or saturated fat. And one cup of cooked brown rice provides two of the three recommended daily servings of whole grains for Americans.

Looking for ideas to get your students and employees excited about the role of rice and whole grains in a healthy diet? Take some inspiration from the Whole Grain Heroes Challenge, a K-12 program developed by Doug Wordell, director of nutrition services for Spokane (Wash.) School District, which serves more than 23,000 meals a day. The promotion encourages students to commit to eating whole grains like brown rice every day and to start making healthier food choices overall. As a result of this initiative and other forward-thinking campaigns, Wordell successfully has made more than half of *all* his menu items whole grain, and brown rice is a key ingredient to acclimating students to healthier food choices. “We offer brown rice daily at our high schools and middle schools and almost weekly at our elementary schools,” reports Wordell. “Our Asian dishes and rice bowls have been very popular, especially vegetable and rice combinations; students think they are great!”

The goals of Spokane’s Whole Grain Heroes Challenge are to educate kids and staff about the nutritional benefits of whole-grain-rich foods and to increase whole-grain consumption and raise awareness of the health benefits offered through the school meal program. Here’s how Wordell and his team make it work:

- Plan out meals and highlight daily grain offerings.
- Determine prizes that are appropriate

for different grade levels and order Whole Grain Hero T-shirts (Wordell’s team designed these and has produced them with a T-shirt vendor).

- Develop student contracts that outline their pledges for daily whole-grain consumption at school and/or home.
- After the end of each week of the contest/promotion, require a teacher and/or parent to verify that the student completed the challenge and met the contract.
- Elementary school classes with the highest percentage of Whole Grain Heroes (those recording consumption of a whole-grain item each day of each contest week) are awarded Whole Grain Hero T-shirts. Middle and high school heroes can be selected by random drawing. Prizes can vary.

It’s All in the Grain

Whether this article served as Rice in School Nutrition 101 to those new to menuing, prepping, serving (and eating) rice or provided veterans with a few new creative tips to apply, you’re now ready to step up your use of a versatile grain that’s not just delicious, but nutritious, too! Check out the recipes accompanying this article for ideas to apply in your own operation, or take a cue from the restaurants that your students frequent and adapt some of their popular creations for your menu. However you offer or expand on your current rice offerings, kids are bound to note that your operation has “the rice stuff”! **SN**

Shaily Jariwala is manager of domestic promotion for the USA Rice Federation. Rice photos courtesy of **USA Rice Federation.**

HMONG BEEF FRIED RICE



YIELD: 100 servings
PER SERVING: 302 cal., 20 g pro., 25 g carb., 1 g fiber, 13 g fat, 185 mg chol., 415 mg sod.

INGREDIENTS

Beef, ground—13 lbs., 10 ozs.
Garlic powder—1 ½ ozs.
Sugar—4 ozs.
Salt—2 ¾ ozs.
Scrambled eggs—10 lbs.
Water—3 gals.
Rice, brown—24 cups
Cilantro sprigs—as garnish
Peas—as garnish
Scallions, chopped—as garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the beef to at least 165°F. Drain or skim off all fat.
2. Add the sugar, salt and garlic powder to the beef and heat back up to 165°F.
3. If not using a pre-cooked scrambled egg mixture, scramble the eggs by baking them in a greased pan for 20-25 minutes.
4. Combine the uncooked rice and the water with the beef mixture. Divide among four steamtable pans.
5. Cover and bake for 45 minutes or until the water is absorbed.
6. Stir in the cooked eggs (approximately 4 cups per pan).
7. Portion into 1 cup servings. Serve with cilantro sprigs, green peas and scallions. These may be added to the mixture or offered as toppings or a garnish.

Photo, recipe & recipe analysis: St. Paul Public Schools Nutrition Services, <http://ns.spps.org/menuRecipes>

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Recipes obtained from outside sources and published in *School Nutrition* have not been tested by the magazine or SNA in a school foodservice setting, except for certain “Kitchen Wisdom” selections, which are evaluated by a volunteer pool of operators. When available, nutrient analyses are provided by the recipe source. Required ingredients, preparation steps and nutrient content make some recipes more appropriate for catering applications or adult meals. Readers are encouraged to test recipes and calculate their own nutrition analyses and meal patterns before adding a recipe to school menus. In addition, *SN* recognizes that individual schools use varying documentation methods and preparation steps to comply with HACCP principles; we encourage you to add your own HACCP steps to these recipes.