



Cooking Grains With Your Rice Cooker

Whole grains fans, did you know that you can use a rice cooker to prepare all your favorite grains – and more? Beyond what the single-grain name may convey, rice cookers can be used to make everything from millet, soups, and polenta to porridge, pudding, and more. Their hands-free nature allows you to more easily cook and incorporate whole grains into any meal, while keeping your focus on the more detailed parts of your dish.

Rice cookers free up your stove and give you overall more cooking space; they are efficient and self-monitoring; their tight seals make for a cooler and steam-free kitchen; and, they even keep your grains warm until you're ready to serve. There are several different makes, models, and sizes available, and there is a world of cookbooks out there solely dedicated to the art of creative rice cooker dishes. Here at the WGC, we think of them as the all-round, cook-every-grain-under-the-sun wonder machine that no whole grain lover should be without!



HOW IT WORKS

The rice cooker intuitively cooks until all the water has been completely absorbed by your grain, and then it switches itself over to its “warming” setting to keep your dish warm until you serve. Because of the machine’s tight seal, rice cookers lose less liquid to evaporation, so using a slightly smaller amount of water, rather than more, is always a better idea. WGC Culinary Advisor Robin Asbell suggests using the white rice setting for grains that take 25 minutes or less, like buckwheat or millet, and the brown rice setting for larger grains that require longer cooking. Experiment, and you’ll know what works for your favorites in no time.

BEYOND RICE

A freed-up chef is typically a more adventurous chef. With the added convenience of a rice cooker, many people feel more inclined to try their hands at new whole grains that they’ve never cooked before. It’s easy to explore the more exotic grains like Kamut®, amaranth and teff when their cook-time is entirely self-monitored. In general, when cooking different grains in a rice cooker, use **the grain to liquid ratio you would normally use in a pot.**

SHORTEN YOUR KITCHEN TIME

Some hearty grains like wheat berries, spelt, and Kamut® can take up to 75 minutes to cook. That’s a lot of time to keep an eye on a pot! Rice cookers, with their own automatic shut-off, simply stop the cooking process and switch to “warm” when they’re done. You never have to worry about losing track, and it’s safe to leave the kitchen and do other things.

PUT IT ALL IN ONE POT

Some rice cooker models come with an added basket for steaming vegetables at the same time as your grain. What an easy way to incorporate more veggies into your meals! Are you making whole wheat cous cous and a Mediterranean vegetable medley tonight? Just put the cous cous in and the vegetables on top, and you will have a complete meal ready in no time.

FOR BUSY MORNINGS

They say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but cook-time is limited in the bustle of a workweek morning. What if you could cook up warm bowls of nutrient-dense, homemade oatmeal for the whole house, worry-free, while getting ready for your day? Using a rice cooker, you can literally plug in breakfast and walk away without having to monitor your meal. Just add in your favorite flavorings, such as cinnamon, walnuts, raisins or apple slices, and go about your morning regime. By the time you’ve finished all your sunup tasks, your oats will be done too, and you’ll have a

yummy breakfast–from–scratch, warmed and waiting for you.

RESOURCES

If you're interested in learning more about how to become rice–cooker savvy for all of your whole grains, here are some resources to check out:

Most rice cookers come with recipe books of their own, but one of the top–rated independent books we've found, with 250 rice cooker recipes, is **The Ultimate Rice Cooker Cookbook** by Beth Hensperger

Popular blogs on rice–cooker–cooking exist with advice like this one on **5 Things You Can Make in a Rice Cooker (Other Than Rice)**

Rice Cooker Fetish is a jovial ode to the versatility of rice cookers, with several recipes and tutorials

WHAT HAVE YOU COOKED UP?

Got a great rice–cooker recipe? **Please feel free to share** any whole grains creations that you have made using your rice cooker!