

## FOODSERVICE FACT SHEET

# *California Wild Rice*

Everyone who enjoys California wild rice will benefit from its nutritional composition. Thanks to the optimal conditions under which it's grown, Mother Nature has blessed this unusual grain with amazing qualities. California wild rice is a high-fiber complex carbohydrate, high in quality protein and fat-free. It has a delicious, nutty flavor and chewy texture. It's not surprising today's health-conscious consumers are exploring the culinary delights of California wild rice!



www.cawildrice.com

### **Wild Rice in California**

Wild rice is a semi-aquatic grass species native only to North America. Native Americans have harvested wild rice for thousands of years. In California, it grows in well-planned, man-made paddies with water depths of less than 1 foot. California wild rice is a long, slender, coffee-colored kernel that butterflies open during cooking to reveal a cream-colored interior.

California's wild rice industry began in 1972 when a white rice farmer decided to try Manoomin wild rice seeds in Northern California. Commercial production of California wild rice began around 1977.

California harvests between 1,200 and 1,500 pounds of wild rice per acre, with a potential to harvest up to 2,000 pounds per acre. Both skill and luck enable California's wild rice farmers to produce such high yields. Management techniques acquired from growing white rice have enabled wild rice farmers to control the environment in which to produce this grain.

Water management is a key element. Water from the High Sierra and Cascades flowing into the wild rice growing regions of Shasta, Lake, Modoc, Lassen, Butte, Colusa, Yuba, Yolo and Sutter counties is controlled through a system of dams and irrigation networks.

This system allows farmers to regulate the amount of water and to control when and where to water.

Luck comes in the form of California's Mediterranean climate. In Northern California, the long, dry, warm summer usually stretches from April through October. Other factors contributing to the success of the California wild rice industry include the absence of plant disease due to the warm climate and the necessity, in some growing areas, to reseed the fields completely each year, resulting in a more controlled crop. And, since California wild rice is relatively free of common pests, California wild rice is grown virtually pesticide-free. Another reason California wild rice growers limit their pesticides is to protect the migratory birds whose fly path is over the wild rice growing areas of California. Wild rice fields offer both food and nesting places for annual migrations of waterfowl and shorebirds. They also provide a habitat for numerous species of birds and animals.

## Nutrition and Health

### The Amazing Nutritional Qualities of California Wild Rice

The nutritional value of whole grains cannot be overstated. A 1/3 cup serving of wild rice provides roughly 16 grams of whole grains, or the equivalent of one serving of a whole grain. California wild rice contains more than 12% protein uncooked and is significantly richer in protein than white rice or most other grains. Wild rice has more niacin than brown rice and is a good source of other B vitamins,

phosphorus, potassium and calcium. One serving offers 10% of the U.S.RDA for iron. It is high in complex carbohydrates and is a good source of fiber. It is fat-free and is low in sodium. One serving of cooked wild rice contains about 114 calories. Without a doubt, wild rice is an important component of a balanced diet.

### Wild Rice: a Healthy Whole Grain

According to the Whole Grains Council, all grains, including wild rice, start life as whole grains. In their natural state growing in the fields, whole grains are the entire seed of a plant. This seed, called a kernel is made up of three key parts: the bran, the germ and the endosperm.

#### California Wild Rice Nutrients\*

(based on a 1/2-cup serving of cooked wild rice)

Protein	4.0 g
Fat	0.4 g
Dietary Fiber	1.0 g
Total Carbohydrate	23.5
Calories	114.0

#### Minerals:

Calcium	7.6 mg
Phosphorus	103.0 mg
Iron	0.5 mg
Potassium	67.6 mg
Zinc	1.2 mg
Sodium	1.0 mg

#### Vitamins:

Riboflavin	0.1 mg
Niacin	1.5 mg

\*Source: Cargill Analytical Services

Refining normally removes the bran and the germ, leaving only the endosperm. Without the bran and germ, about 25% of a grain's protein is lost, along with at least seventeen key ingredients. Processors add back some vitamins and minerals to enrich refined grains, so refined products still contribute valuable nutrients, but whole grains are healthier,

California wild rice is significantly richer in protein than white rice or most other grains.

**California wild rice is a healthy whole grain.**

Wild rice is high in complex carbohydrates and is a good source of fiber.

**One serving of cooked wild rice contains only about 114 calories.**

Wild rice is fat-free and is low in sodium.

**California wild rice adds value to the plate.**

Wild rice blends well with a variety of flavors and can be used in chilled and hot recipes.

**Wild rice has a delicious, nutty flavor and chewy texture.**

California wild rice complements dishes with fruits, nuts, meats, poultry and fish.

provide more protein, fiber and many important vitamins and minerals.

Whole grains are often an even better source of disease-fighting phytochemicals and antioxidants than fruits and vegetables. Moreover, whole grains have some valuable antioxidants not found in fruits and vegetables as well as B vitamins, vitamin E, magnesium, iron and fiber.

Repeated studies show that consuming at least 3 servings (48 oz.) daily of whole grains reduces stroke risk by 30 - 36%; type 2 diabetes risk 21 - 30%; heart disease risk 25 - 28% and improves weight maintenance. (Source: Whole Grains Council)

## Preparation and Cooking Tips

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Wild rice requires more liquid and cooking time than white rice and expands three to four times its raw size after cooking. The amount of liquid needed and length of cooking time can vary widely depending on the source of the grain and how it was processed.

Like many other grains, a grading system has been developed for wild rice. After it has been dried and hulled, it receives a grade of A, B or C depending on the thickness and length of the kernel. The thicker the kernel, the longer it takes to cook, with A grade being the thickest.

In general, the California wild rice rule of thumb is a ration of 1 to 3. That means for every cup of raw wild rice 3 cups of liquid

will be needed for cooking. Average cooking times range from 30 to 50 minutes.

Wild rice should always be cooked covered although the rice may be stirred from time to time. Wild rice is properly cooked when kernels are tender but not mushy and many have burst open to reveal a cream-colored interior. Overcooking will cause split kernels to curl. For optimum taste, wild rice's chewy texture should remain true after cooking.

If ingredients are to be added to the wild rice, their cooking times must be kept in mind relative to the long cooking time for wild rice. Ingredients such as some vegetables should be added after the wild rice is partly cooked.

Most of the California wild rice crop – 80% – is used in a blend such as wild and white rice and wild and brown rice.

### **Serving Suggestions**

Chefs appreciate California wild rice for its quality, upscale image and complex, smoky, nutty flavor. Wild rice adds value to the plate, enabling operators to charge more for their menu items. California wild rice blends well with a wide variety of flavors and is versatile enough to star in both chilled and hot recipes. Martin Yan, cookbook author and host of the PBS television series *Yan Can Cook* notes, "I love to use California wild rice as a filling in all kinds of dishes."

Uncooked wild rice will keep indefinitely when placed in dry storage. Cooked, drained and tightly covered wild rice can be stored in the refrigerator for one to two weeks.

Because of new harvesting methods and the varieties of wild rice available, the price of California wild rice has come down drastically. Foodservice operators no longer need to be concerned about a high food cost for wild rice.



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**California Wild Rice Advisory Board**

[www.cawildrice.com](http://www.cawildrice.com)