

Minnesota Grown Wild Rice

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Oh, wild rice. With so many fond thoughts of this traditional Minnesota product, why is it that wild rice continues to remain so mysterious to us? The Minnesota Grown Directory lists [9 producers of wild rice](#) who are passionate about their product. We went to them to discover more about its history, rice harvest, and advice for usage. Check it out, and don't forget to pick up some wild rice from a [producer near you](#) in order to try some of the recipes in this article!

Rice or...?

Well, first things first. According to Minnesota Grown member [Red Lake Nation Foods, Inc.](#), wild rice isn't even rice! Don't worry, we were surprised too. Although it resembles rice, wild rice is actually an aquatic grass seed that is often referred to as a pseudograin or a false grain. Just because it isn't a "real" grain, doesn't mean it doesn't measure up. Red Lake Nation Foods shares that wild rice actually boasts *higher* nutrition than regular rice with more protein, minerals, and B vitamins per serving. Not to mention, it's low in fat and, like other pseudograins, it's gluten free. Grains are long, slender and black and have a distinctive nutty flavor. It's typically available in three grades. 1) Giant, which is a very long grain and the best quality, 2) Fancy, which is a medium grain and of slightly lesser quality, and 3) Select, which is a short grain.

The Good Berry

Minnesota Grown member, [Minnestalgia](#), tells us that whether it is called Manoomin ("good berry") by the early Native Americans, or Riz Sauvage ("wild rice") by the first Europeans and Traders, there is no other grain with so much history. Nor is there a grain that has been so culturally and spiritually revered. Many battles have been fought over the wild rice beds because Native Americans knew that the rice could sustain their families through the long, cold Northern winters. The rice beds also attract ducks, geese and fish, which are an additional food source.

[Red Lake Nation Foods](#) shares that traditionally, September was referred to as "ricing moon," the time when the Ojibwe left their homes to set up camps near the lakes for the harvest. They spent weeks gathering and processing the wild rice. This included drying the rice in the sun, parching it over a fire, and separating the hulls from the seeds. The Chippewa celebrated the end of the harvest with a festival of thanksgiving! This might be why wild rice is popular during the holiday season today.

Cultivated vs. Wild

You may have seen wild rice labeled both ways. Since the 1950's, the rising popularity of wild rice has created a demand that entrepreneurial farmers are seeking to meet. Most often, wild rice available in the grocery stores across the country is referred to as "paddy rice" or cultivated. This is grown in rice paddies and is relatively consistent crop after crop. This type of rice is a hybrid developed by the University of Minnesota and cooks quickly and uniformly. You can find rice that has been farmed by Minnesotan producers from individuals like the Godward family at [Minnestalgia](#) foods!

Conversely, wild rice grows wild in lakes and rivers. This wild rice requires just the right conditions to grow and will only grow naturally in northern Minnesota and Canada. To grow here, rice needs water that stands at the right level, as well as water that is flowing at the right speed. The bottom of the lake needs to be rich in humus and the temperatures need to be like those you see in northern Minnesota. Many people have noted that the rice grown in these conditions has a noticeably different flavor. This kind of rice can be purchased from growers like [Red Lake Nation Foods](#)!

Often considered a delicacy by non-Native Americans, wild rice doesn't need to be reserved for a special occasion. Wild rice is easy to prepare, affordable and available year round.

Let's Eat!

Ration your wild rice at 1 to 3. That means for every cup of raw wild rice, 3 cups of liquid will be needed for cooking. Average cooking time ranges from 25-30 minutes for Quick Cook rice and 45-60 minutes for the darker finish varieties. Wild rice requires more liquid and cooking time than white rice and expands three to four times its raw size after cooking. Wild rice should always be cooked covered although the rice may be stirred occasionally. 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.

Wild rice takes some time to cook, but it can easily be turned into a convenience food! Cook your rice ahead of time and freeze it to make it easy to warm for a quick dinner. Cooked wild rice keeps in the refrigerator for one week or freezes for six months. Uncooked wild rice will keep indefinitely when placed in a cool, dry storage place.

DID YOU KNOW?

Wild rice is not a rice at all! It's actually an aquatic grass referred to as a pseudograin.

Looking to try something new? How about wild rice for breakfast! Check out the recipe for [Minnesota Wild Rice Porridge](#), featured in this month's issue of the Pick of the Month! Also try these great recipes from our featured producers, [Red Lake Nation Foods](#) and [Minnestalgia](#)!

[Minnestalgia Wild Rice Seafood Salad](#)

[Minnestalgia Cheesy Wild Rice Soup](#)

[Red Lake Nation Foods Recipes](#) (Such as: Wild Rice Cranberry Bread, Wild Rice Stuffing, Chicken Wild Rice Casserole, Creamy Potato and Wild Rice Soup)