

Black Rice Set to be New Superfood



Rice is the staple diet of Asia and in many parts of China it is a fixture at every meal. To the Chinese, it is the symbol of life.



In the South, the phrase “Have you had your rice today?” is commonly used as a greeting. If a person lost his job, he is said to have had his rice bowl broken and if you are a dinner guest, it is expected that you eat every grain of rice on your plate, to leave a grain or two is considered bad manners.

According to myth when a prolonged period of flooding destroyed all the crops, people were left with no choice, but to hunt animals. One day when a wild dog ran up to them, several yellowy seeds were found stuck to his tail. The people removed the seeds and planted them. They again had rice.

In China today, rice is not just boiled, it is used in many things from making noodles to desserts and eaten with every meal including breakfast. Congee, a type of rice gruel is very popular breakfast dish, served with vegetables.

The origins of rice have been lost through the years, but it is believed it first came from India. Archeologists in Korea found artifacts imprinted with rice grains, dating back to 4,000BC, evidence indicating that South East Asians were the first people to have cultivated rice. Several references to rice have been found in Buddhist scriptures and the lack of any reference to rice in Jewish scriptures or the Bible add to the belief that rice originally came from Asia.



It is believed that the Greeks were introduced to rice by Alexander the Great when he brought it home from his travels to India in the 4th century BC. The Moors carried rice with them as food when they invaded Spain and Spain in turn took rice to Italy in the 1400's and from there it quickly spread throughout Southern Europe. Although rice was not a part of the staple diet of the Pilgrims, it was packed on the Mayflower and has been a staple crop in the US since the late 1600's.



In the 1500-1600's, Malaria was prevalent in Southern Europe with many people believing that the swampy conditions needed for growing rice contributed to the spreading of the disease.

Harvested rice contains a layer of bran and is encased in a hull, while white rice has had both the bran and hull removed during the milling process. Brown rice has had only the hull removed

leaving it a much more nutritious dish full of protein and minerals, whereas parboiled white rice has gone through the processing procedure before milling and so retains most of its nutrients.

Long grain rice is usually used by the Chinese which produces much fluffier rice. Also in China, glutinous or “sticky rice” is used mainly for snacks whereas in other parts of Asia, it is used in place of regular rice.

The black and red rice are less popular with the Europeans. Grown throughout Asia, red rice is a member of the glutinous family and though it is not considered to be very edible, the health benefits of its extract is generating a lot of interest being helpful in lowering cholesterol levels and improving blood circulation.



Chinese Black Rice (Forbidden Black Rice) which is a medium grained glutinous rice which is black when raw and becomes a dark purple colour when cooked and is sweeter than some rice, but can be used in both savoury and sweet recipes.

Black Rice was once given only to the Emperors as a tonic and known as “the Emperors Rice” and was forbidden to anyone else. Now it is widely available and used in the making of noodles. The black rice is great for rice pudding, is high in fibre, with a nutty flavor.

New research conducted at the Department of Food Science at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge has shown that black rice bran beats both the blueberries and blackberries as an antioxidant and has far more other health benefits at a fraction of the cost.

In addition to the anti oxidant the back rice is highly rich in iron and fiber and may possibly used in the future to prevent heart disease and cancer in addition to many other health conditions that have shown signs of improvement with anthocyanin antioxidants.



The black rice is abundantly used in the Asian cuisine where it is sometimes used as a food ornament with noodles and sushi. In addition to the antioxidants, the black rice is rich in both iron and fiber. Therefore, black rice might be used in the future to prevent heart disease, cancer in addition to a variety of other health conditions that have showed signs of improvement with anthocyanin antioxidant.

Ref.: <http://www.pattayadailynews.com/en/2010/08/29/black-rice-set-to-be-new-superfood/>