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Everybody Cooks Rice

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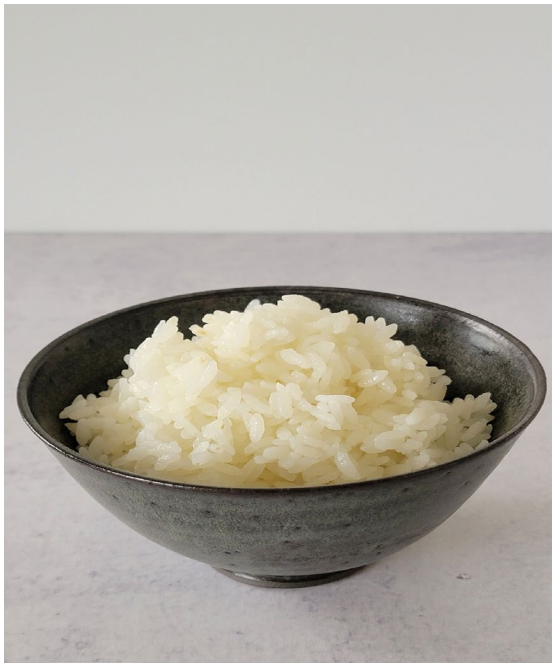
Everybody Cooks Rice



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Background:

Growing up in a Japanese household, rice was more than just a food—it was a staple of our daily lives and a symbol of our cultural heritage. From fluffy steamed rice that accompanied our meals to special dishes like sushi and onigiri, rice was at the heart of our cuisine. Each grain carried with it a sense of tradition and comfort that I cherished.

Years later, when I met my husband, a Cuban man with his own rich culinary traditions, I was delighted to discover that rice played an equally important role in his culture. His family’s meals often featured dishes like arroz con pollo and black beans with rice, showcasing a different yet familiar way of celebrating this versatile grain.

Our shared love for rice became a beautiful metaphor for our relationship, bridging our diverse backgrounds and bringing us closer together. It was fascinating to see how, despite our different upbringings, rice was a common thread that connected our pasts and shaped our present.

When I came across the book "Everyone Cooks Rice" by Norah Dooley, it resonated deeply with our story. The book illustrates how families from various cultural backgrounds prepare rice in their unique ways, highlighting both

diversity and unity. It reminded me of the blend of Japanese and Cuban culinary traditions that enrich our own family’s dining table.

Inspired by the book's message, I decided to create a workshop to celebrate the cultural significance of rice and its ability to unite people from different backgrounds. The workshop aims to bring people together, much like the book does, by sharing recipes, stories, and the joy of cooking. Through this workshop, I hope to foster a sense of community, appreciation for diversity, and a deeper understanding of how something as simple as rice can connect us all.

Goals:

1. **Cultural Appreciation:** To foster an understanding and appreciation of different cultures through their culinary traditions, focusing on rice as a unifying element.
2. **Community Building:** To create a sense of community and connection among participants by sharing and exploring diverse recipes and cooking techniques.
3. **Culinary Skills:** To enhance participants' cooking skills and knowledge by introducing them to Japanese rice cooking techniques.
4. **Educational Enrichment:** To provide an educational experience that highlights the significance of rice in

different cultures and its role in family traditions and meals.

Objectives:

1. **Introduction to Rice Varieties:**
    - Participants will learn about different types of rice (e.g., short-grain, long-grain, jasmine, basmati) and their specific uses in various cuisines, with a special focus on Japanese rice varieties like sushi rice and Koshihikari.
2. **Recipe Sharing and Cooking Demonstrations:**
    - Participants will be introduced to a range of rice-based dishes from Japanese cuisine, such as sushi, onigiri (rice balls), and donburi (rice bowls).
    - The workshop will include live cooking demonstrations of selected Japanese recipes, allowing participants to observe and learn traditional Japanese cooking techniques.
3. **Cultural Storytelling:**
    - Participants will hear personal stories and cultural insights related to rice from the workshop facilitator, particularly focusing on Japanese traditions and the significance of rice in Japanese culture.
    - Additional stories from fellow participants will enrich the understanding of rice in various cultures.

4. **Hands-On Cooking Experience:**
    - Participants will engage in hands-on cooking activities, preparing selected Japanese rice dishes such as sushi rolls, onigiri, and chirashizushi (scattered sushi) in small groups or individually, to practice and reinforce their learning.
5. **Tasting and Discussion:**
    - Participants will have the opportunity to taste the Japanese dishes prepared during the workshop and engage in discussions about the flavors, techniques, and cultural significance of each dish.

Standards:

Geography Standards:

- **SS.3.G.1.3:** Label the continents and oceans on a world map.
    - *Objective:* Identify key rice-growing regions around the world on a map, with a focus on Japan.
- **SS.5.G.3.1:** Describe the climate and physical features of various regions of North America.
    - *Objective:* Discuss the geographic and climatic factors that influence rice farming globally, including in Japan.

World Languages Standards:

- **WL.K12.AM.4.1:** Recognize basic practices and perspectives of the target culture.
    - *Objective:* Introduce participants to basic Japanese vocabulary related to food and cooking, enhancing their cultural and language skills.
- **WL.K12.NM.2.1:** Understand and follow simple instructions in the target language.
    - *Objective:* Include interactive language activities where participants practice basic Japanese cooking-related vocabulary through hands-on activities.

Social Studies Standards:

- **SS.K.A.2.1:** Compare children and families of today with those in the past.
    - *Objective:* Discuss how rice has been a staple in various cultures historically and compare traditional Japanese rice dishes with modern interpretations.
- **SS.1.C.1.2:** Describe the characteristics of responsible citizenship in the school community.
    - *Objective:* Promote community building through shared cooking experiences, emphasizing collaboration and cultural respect.

- **SS.4.A.3.1:** Identify the origins of colonial America.
    - *Objective:* Highlight the historical significance of rice in Japanese culture and its journey to other parts of the world, including its adaptation in Florida.

Materials Needed:

1. Cooking Equipment and Supplies:

- **Rice Cooker:** For cooking different types of rice, especially Japanese varieties.
- **Pots and Pans:** For cooking and demonstrating various recipes.
- **Knives:** For cutting ingredients.
- **Cutting Boards:** For preparing ingredients.
- **Bowls and Mixing Utensils:** For mixing ingredients and making rice dishes.
- **Measuring Cups and Spoons:** For precise measurements of ingredients.
- **Sushi Rolling Mats:** For making sushi rolls.
- **Plastic Wrap:** For making rice balls.
- **Serving Dishes and Utensils:** For serving the prepared dishes.

2. Ingredients:

- **Rice Varieties:** Sushi rice, Koshihikari, and other types used in Japanese cooking.

- **Rice Vinegar:** For seasoning sushi rice.
- **Nori (Seaweed Sheets):** For making sushi rolls.
- **Soy Sauce and Mayo:** For seasoning and serving.
- **Fresh Vegetables:** Such as cucumbers, avocados, and carrots for sushi fillings.
- **Fish and Seafood:** Canned tuna, smoked salmon, and imitation crab.
- **Pickled Vegetables:** Such as pickled ginger.
- **Seasonings and Spices:** Such as salt, sugar, and wasabi.
- **Toppings and Garnishes:** Such as sesame seeds, sliced green onions, and furikake.

3. Educational Materials:

- **Recipe Booklets:** Printed booklets with all the recipes demonstrated in the workshop.
- **Cultural Story Booklet:** Information on the cultural significance of rice in Japanese cuisine and other cultures.
- **Maps and Visual Aids:** Maps showing the global distribution of rice cultivation and other visual aids related to rice farming.
- **Language Handouts:** Basic Japanese vocabulary related to food and cooking.
- The Book, "Everyone Cooks Rice" by Norah Dooley

4. Technology and Presentation Tools:

- **Promethean Interactive Board:** For displaying slides, maps, and visual aids.
- **Laptop or Tablet:** For running presentations and showing instructional videos.
- **Microphone and Speakers:** To ensure everyone can hear the presentations and demonstrations.

5. Participant Materials:

- **Gloves:** For handling food safely.
- **Hand Sanitizer:** To maintain hygiene.

6. Miscellaneous Supplies:

- **Cleaning Supplies:** Dish soap, sponges, towels, and trash bags for cleaning up after the cooking activities.
- **Disposable Plates, Cups, and Utensils:** For serving and tasting the prepared dishes.

Outline/Overview: Japanese Rice Cooking and Cultural Exploration

Duration: 2 hours (adjustable based on your schedule. You can do it in two days.)

Objective: To provide students with an immersive experience in Japanese rice cooking techniques, cultural insights related to rice, and an understanding of rice cultivation globally.

Lesson 1: Introduction to Japanese Rice and Culinary Traditions (Total of 60 minutes)

1. Introduction （Time: 10 minutes）
    - Briefly outline the goals and objectives of the workshop.
    - Discuss the historical significance of rice in Japanese culture.
    - Highlight its role in everyday meals, festivals, and cultural traditions.
2. Geography of Rice （Time: 15 minutes）
    - Present a map showing global rice cultivation regions, focusing on Japan.
    - Discuss the geographic and climatic factors influencing rice farming.
3. Read the story, “Everyone Cooks Rice” by Norah Dooley and Language Enrichment （Time: 20 minutes）
    - Share personal stories and cultural insights related to rice and Japanese cuisine.

- Invite students to share their own experiences or connections to rice-based dishes.

4. Language Enrichment （Time: 15 minutes）
    - Introduce basic Japanese vocabulary related to food and cooking.
    - Practice pronunciation and usage through interactive activities.

Lesson 2: Hands-On Cooking Experience

(Total of 60 minutes) **Cooking rice takes time. (about one hour) So, please have it cooked prior to this lesson.*

1. Preparation and Cooking Demonstrations (Time : 15 minutes)
    - Onigiri (Rice Balls): Show techniques for shaping and filling onigiri.
2. Hands-On Cooking Activity （Time: 30 minutes）
    - Students work in small groups or pairs to prepare onigiri.
    - Facilitate and assist students as they practice the cooking techniques.
3. Tasting and Discussion （Time: 10 minutes）
    - Share the prepared dishes with students for tasting.
    - Encourage discussion on the flavors, techniques, and cultural significance of each dish.

4. Q&A and Wrap-Up （Time: 5 minutes）
    - Open the floor for questions and answers about Japanese cuisine, rice dishes, and cultural aspects.

Additional Notes:

- Flexibility: Adjust the timing and activities based on the number of students, their prior knowledge, and their level of culinary experience.
- Engagement: Incorporate interactive elements like storytelling, Q&A sessions, and hands-on cooking to keep students engaged throughout the lessons.
- Materials: Ensure all necessary materials and ingredients are prepared and organized before the workshop begins to facilitate smooth transitions between activities.

Additional Activities/Assessment

Students can draw their experiences and label their pictures. Or if students are old enough to write, they can

compare and contrast the rice they eat at home and Japanese rice (short grain rice).
Another idea is to create a map to show where rice is grown or learn to say a few Japanese words they used for this lesson.

If students' parents are willing to help, have the International Night where you can dress up with native dress and do a show that includes dance and songs with rice dishes from different countries.

Resources

Asian food items can be bought from Amazon. However, if you live close to the Asian grocery market, the prices are usually cheaper. You don’t really need sushi-grade rice. Any short-grain rice works.

There are a lot of Asian grocery markets in the North Miami Beach area.

RECIPE

Onigiri with edamame and ginger

Ready in 20 minutes

Serves Depends!

Ingredients

- 6 cups of cooked short-grain rice
- Edamame (shelled/as much as you like)
- Soy sauce (for your liking)
- Fresh ginger (cut into julienne/ as much as you like)
- nori/seaweed …..optional

Preparation

1. In a medium bowl, mix cooked rice, edamame, and fresh ginger. Add soy sauce to your taste.
2. Mix gently. Wet your hand to place some rice to make or form triangle shape. Wrap with Nori if you like.

Japanese Beef Bowl (Gyudon)

Ready in 20 minutes

Serves 4 people

Ingredients

- 400 g Thinly sliced beef
- 1 ½ Onion sliced
- 1 teaspoon Dashi powder
- 100 ml White wine/sake
- 5 tablespoons Soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Mirin
- 350 ml water
- 1 ½ tablespoons Sugar
- 1 small piece of Grated ginger

Preparation

1.Cook onion and beef in the pot with other ingredients.

2. Once onion and beef are done, serve on top of cooked rice. Garnish with red pickled ginger.