UCI Health

Fried rice-style grains with chicken

Ingredients

- 4 cups cooked grain, chilled (best to use day-old white or brown rice, farro, barley, quinoa or riced cauliflower)
- 2 cups protein ((leftover chicken breast, turkey, shrimp, edamame or firm tofu)
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3–4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated (optional)
- 3–4 scallions, sliced, keeping white and green parts separate
- 2 cups vegetables (options: frozen peas, diced carrots, sweet pepper, cabbage, mushrooms, broccoli or 2–3 handfuls of greens)
- 2 tablespoons avocado or canola oil, divided
- 2–3 tablespoons low-sodium tamari, to taste
- 1–2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- Optional garnish: Toasted cashews or peanuts, chili paste or sriracha

Nutritional information

Total cost: $7.00/$1.75 per serving

Serves: 4

Calories: 530 per serving

Directions

- Use refrigerated leftover rice or grains. If using freshly cooked rice, spread grains on sheet pan and chill uncovered for at least 30 minutes. Break up any clumps with your hands or a fork.
- Prepare all ingredients and gather near stove for cooking.
- In a small bowl, beat eggs and keep near stove.
- Make sure all your ingredients are chopped and close by, since this recipe cooks quickly.
- Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in large nonstick skillet or wok over medium-high heat, add onion and cook for about 2 minutes, until softened.
- Add garlic, ginger (if using) and white parts of scallions and cook 30 seconds, just until they become fragrant.
- Add vegetables. If you're using frozen veggies, cook them for 2 to 3 minutes until they're heated through and any water has evaporated. For fresh, firm vegetables like carrots or broccoli, let them cook a few minutes to soften. Move everything to one side of the pan.
- Pour the second tablespoon of oil onto empty side of pan.
- Add eggs to empty side of pan, allow to sit a few seconds, scramble gently then fold into vegetable mix.
- Add cold grains and cooked chicken to skillet.
- Spread mixture across pan, let sit about a minute so bottom gets crispy, then toss.

Recipe and photo by Jessica VanRoo, executive chef of the Susan Samueli Integrative Health Institute, part of UCI Health.

Directions

- Repeat until mixture is hot and golden crispy bits are visible. (Don't overcrowd pan. If making a large batch, divide and cook in two rounds so mixture is fried, not steamed.)
- Add tamari around edges of skillet then toss mixture to coat, adding more tamari as needed.
- Turn off heat. Drizzle sesame oil over top and stir so it keeps its toasty flavor.
- Garnish with green parts of scallions and cashews or chili paste, if desired.
- Serve immediately.

Tips

- This is more a formula than fixed recipe. You can use whatever leftover grain, protein or vegetables are in the refrigerator.
- The most important rule is to use cold grain. Warm, fresh rice is soft and wet, so it turns mushy in the pan.
- Different grains cook in their own ways. Brown rice, farro, and barley get crisp like white rice and add more fiber. Quinoa and other small grains stay softer and will not get as crunchy, but they still taste good and work well. If you want the lowest carbs, use riced cauliflower and skip chilling, since it cooks fast from frozen.
- Avoid oversalting. Tamari is the main source of sodium in this recipe. Start with two tablespoons, taste, and only add more if you need it. If you want less sodium, use low-sodium tamari or coconut aminos, which is helpful if you are watching your blood pressure.
- To make this dish meatless, usec cubed firm tofu or a cup of shelled edamame, browned in the skillet first.
- For a plant-based version, omit egg, add more tofu and an extra teaspoon of oil to keep mixture from drying out.
- If the pan is too full, steam gets trapped, and the grain turns soft instead of crisp. If you are cooking for a group or making a big batch, cook in batches of about four servings so each one stays hot and crisp.

Storage

- Spread leftover fried grains to cool, about one hour, transfer to a covered container then refrigerate. Eat within 3–4 days. Cooked rice should be refrigerated immediately because bacteria can grow and cause stomach upset.
- To freeze, divide into containers or freezer bags and press flat. Keeps up to 2 months. To eat, thaw overnight in the fridge.
- To reheat, warm fried rice in hot skillet with a splash of water for 2–3 minutes. This method preserves texture better than using a microwave. Entire batch should be hot all the way through. Reheat each portion only once.

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