

Chapter 30

Grain Products

Versatile Grains

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

If you took a poll to find out your classmates' favorite foods, there's a good chance that pasta dishes would be mentioned. A survey of restaurant menus would also confirm that people truly enjoy the variety of dishes that feature pasta as a main ingredient. For many people, pasta is a feel-good food.

Pasta dishes are appealing to people for several reasons.

- ◆ **Ease in preparation.** While preparation can be complicated for some dishes, many pasta dishes can be prepared within a relatively short time.
- ◆ **Flavor.** Flavor draws much appeal for pasta dishes. When vegetables, sauces, cheese, and meats mix with pasta in different combinations, the flavors are varied and delicious.
- ◆ **Versatility.** Pasta is extremely versatile, adding appeal to soups, main dishes, side dishes, and even salads.
- ◆ **Nutrition.** Pasta is healthful because it is low in fat and high in complex carbohydrates. It can also be made with whole-grain flour. Some pasta incorporates a vegetable mix. You may be familiar with red pasta made with sun-dried tomatoes or green pasta that contains spinach.
- ◆ **Cost.** Pasta itself is inexpensive. If other low-cost ingredients are used, a pasta dish can fit easily into the budget.

Pasta should be stored in unopened packages or containers in a cool, dry place away from heat. Because pasta does absorb odors, the storage location should be chosen with this in mind. If stored correctly, pasta can be kept for a year or more.

Pasta comes in all shapes and sizes. How many forms are familiar to you?

Microwaving Pasta and Rice

Preparing rice and pasta by microwaving is an example of an ancient practice improved by technology. With practice and insight, some chefs today receive better results when using a microwave than when preparing pasta on the cooktop.

In conventional cooking, you add the rice or pasta to boiling water. When microwaving, add the rice or pasta to very hot tap water, cover, and bring the ingredients to a boil. To keep the food from boiling over, use an even larger container than when cooking on the range.

Because rice grains are so small, microwaves cook the inside of the rice while simmering water cooks the outside. This even cooking produces firmer, fluffier grains.

Cook regular rice at 100 percent power for the first 5 minutes, bringing the mixture to a boil. A glass casserole allows you to see when boiling occurs. Cook for about 15 minutes longer at 50 percent power to allow the rice time to absorb water. With instant rice, all cooking can be done at 100 percent power. For best results, prepare no more than 1 cup of uncooked rice at a time.

Rice will continue to absorb water and soften during standing time. When the rice is done, the liquid should be completely absorbed. If water remains after the time recommended, let it stand for a few more minutes. Rice that doesn't stand long enough might not fully cook.

Cooking Cereals

Microwaving is a convenient way to prepare many hot cereals, such as oatmeal. Follow the directions on the package or in a microwave cookbook. Cereals are usually cooked uncovered, but they are covered during standing time to help keep the surface moist. Watch closely during cooking or use a large dish to keep the cereal from boiling over. Stir the cereal before standing to eliminate lumps and distribute heat.

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Thinking Critically

1. What advantages are there to microwaving pasta, rice, or cereal? Explain your answer.

2. Why does cooking pasta and rice in the microwave take almost the same amount of time as conventional range-top cooking?

3. Which ingredients in breakfast cereals increase the cost of the cereal? Suggest ways that you could reduce the cost and provide greater nutritional value.

4. List four ways to add whole-grain products to each of your meals.

For Further Study

- ◆ Make a chart comparing the nutritive value of whole-wheat bread, white bread, and wheat bread. What are other differences? What recommendations would you make? Write a summary of your conclusions and submit it to your teacher.
- ◆ Create menu plans for three days that include the number of ounces of grain products, including whole grains, recommended by MyPyramid for a 2,000-calorie diet. Remember that variety is important. Evaluate the nutritive value of the grains in each day's menu. How did they contribute to meeting the daily requirements for protein, carbohydrates, B vitamins, and iron?
- ◆ Research the use of gluten-free flour, such as sorghum flour, brown rice flour, tapioca flour, rice flour, or potato starch flour. Choose one type of flour, and find a recipe to make with it. Compare the recipe you chose to a similar recipe that uses wheat flour. An Internet search of gluten intolerance, gluten-free recipes, or Celiac disease will provide ample information for your research.
- ◆ Create an attractive, informative collage of recipes featuring a variety of pasta and grain products. Display your collage for the class.