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12 Ways to Use Your Rice Cooker for More Than Just Rice

Despite its name, this countertop appliance is an efficient way to cook a many other foods.

By Riley Wofford | Published on April 15, 2024

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A rice cooker is designed for cooking rice, hence its name. It makes [cooking white rice](#) so easy that we often overlook the potential of this countertop appliance for other tasks. Rice cookers are essentially smaller, less powerful pressure cookers. Their steam mechanisms work almost the same way so they can be used for plenty more than just rice. Another bonus, using a rice cooker is often quicker than cooking something on

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are a given, but you can even make things like steamed fish, hard-boiled eggs, and mashed potatoes in a rice cooker. We're here to inspire you with five unexpected ways to use your rice cooker that are easy for the cook and have delicious results.

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Grains

An easy and logical place to start expanding your ideas about rice cookers is by cooking other grains in the appliance. First, know that rice cookers are perfect for cooking [brown rice](#) and wild rice, both turn out fluffy and just right. Then, you're ready to starting making all of your favorite grains in your rice cooker. It will produce chewy barley, [farro](#), quinoa, millet, and more.

Even rice and grain-based dishes can be made in the rice cooker. [Risotto](#) and rice pudding are usually made on the

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me out just as creamy in the rice cooker.
e to continuously stir them as you do

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Oatmeal

You can even prepare your morning bowl of oatmeal in the rice cooker. It can handle all [types of oats](#), including instant, old-fashioned rolled, and steel-cut.

Pasta

You can use a rice cooker to boil pasta in a pinch. It works best for smaller shapes like orzo or ditalini—just make sure the cooker can hold the amount of *cooked* pasta you'll end up with since pasta nearly doubles in volume once cooked.

Beans and Lentils

The rice cooker can also be used to cook dried beans and other legumes like [lentils](#) to tender perfection. If you enjoy making a pot of beans from scratch to use in hearty lunch salads, the rice

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Steaming is the most essential function of a rice cooker, so it

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that need to be handled delicately. Simply arrange the food in the steamer basket and add some water to the cooker.

Vegetables

Start with vegetables—anything that you would steam in a pot can be done in the rice cooker. We like to use it for broccoli, [artichokes](#), [carrots](#), [asparagus](#), whole peas, beets, and cauliflower, but the possibilities are truly endless.

Fish and Chicken

Heart-healthy fish fillets and lean proteins like boneless skinless chicken breast and shrimp also come out tender and moist in the rice cooker. It's very similar to what would happen if you poached these foods.

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Most rice cookers even have a setting specifically for dumplings. We recommend spraying the steamer basket liner with nonstick cooking spray before adding the dumplings to ensure they don't stick.

Eggs

Egg cookery is a strength for the rice cooker. The appliance can handle anything from hard-cooked eggs to folded diner-style omelets.

[Hard-cooked eggs](#) will work similarly in the rice cooker as they do in a pressure cooker or Instant Pot—arrange them on the basket liner to keep the shells from breaking.

You can also cook eggs directly in the pot of the rice cooker. Grease the bottom and sides with some butter or nonstick cooking spray and use the "Cook" setting to create soft

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edges, but they can do just about everything else.

RELATED: [3 Tips That Make Peeling Hard-Boiled Eggs Easy—Plus, a Genius Trick You Need to Try](#)

One-Pot Meals

You'll be pleased to learn that you can make a lot of your favorite one-pot meals in the rice cooker. Dishes that are already built around rice, like [chicken and rice](#), are a great place to start. Most brothy soups can simmer away inside the rice cooker as well, including fan favorites like [chicken noodle](#) and [minestrone](#). Rice cookers work for other brothy dishes like hearty [beef stew](#) and [chili](#).

You don't even necessarily have to follow a recipe to make a one-pot rice cooker meal. Choose a grain (and the corresponding amount of water or broth) and stir in your
etables, and seasonings.

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made them in the oven.

Reheating

The rice cooker is also a great way to warm up or reheat desserts. The steam will remelt the lava inside molten cakes and bring bread pudding and French toast casseroles back to life.

Proofing Bread Dough

You can even use the "keep warm" function to proof bread dough. It's just the right temperature and moisture level to help yeasted doughs rise evenly.

Tips for Using a Rice Cooker Effectively

[SKIP TO CONTENT](#) get the most out of your rice cooker:

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Use broth or stock to boost flavor: This goes for grains and legumes as well as other savory things like steamed vegetables and fish—the flavor from the broth will slowly permeate whatever it is you're cooking, which will only make the food you're steaming taste even better.

Don't sneak a peek: It can be tempting, but try to keep the lid on until the timer goes off. The purpose of the rice cooker is to keep the steam locked inside, so opening the lid can make things dry out more quickly.

Embrace the "keep warm" and "delay start" functions: If your timing is a little off, the "keep warm" function will be your best friend. Use this button and you can keep things warm as long as you need (and [as long as is safe](#)) so you don't have to rush to finish up the rest of the meal. You can even prep non-perishable things like rice and grains in the morning and use the "delay start" button. You set the
and the rice cooker will get to work later

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