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NEWS RELEASE

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Turn Pantry Staples into Wildly Delicious Meals

Don't Forget America's Only Native Cereal Grain ... Wild Rice

As we begin to do more home cooking, versatility and diversity in meal preparation can be a challenge. Remember North America's only native cereal grain when stocking your pantry – it will turn ho-hum pantry and frozen food dinners into interesting, nutritious, and delicious meals.

People tend to stock up on long-lasting, shelf-stable food items such as pasta, beans, and rice. However, once they have these items on hand, they often struggle to come up with new and interesting ways to cook them. Adding wild rice to the list will definitely help.

Shelf-stable? Check. Uncooked, wild rice can stay in your pantry for up to 5 years. Consider cooking wild rice ahead of time as it turns wild rice into a convenience food, available quickly for adding to your favorite recipe. After it's cooked it can be frozen for up to six months or kept in the refrigerator for a full week. Additionally, when cooked and mixed with ground meats, the antioxidants in wild rice help preserve the meat's freshness and flavor after freezing.

Nutritious? Check. Wild rice is packed with over 6.5 grams of protein per cup and is a great source of essential minerals, vitamins, and fiber, making it more nutritious than regular rice and most other grain options. It is 100% whole grain and gluten free. It is one of the few plant sources of 'complete protein,' those proteins containing all the essential amino acids needed for building muscle and regulating metabolism, mood, and the immune system.

Economical? Check. Unlike regular rice, wild rice triples to quadruples in volume when cooked, making 8-10 cups cooked per pound. Thus, at \$8.00 per pound it's less than 50¢ per half cup serving.

Easy? Check. Simply add 1 cup uncooked cultivated wild rice to 3-4 cups boiling water. Return to boil; stir. Cover and simmer 30-45 minutes or until kernels just start to open. Drain any excess liquid. After cooking with wild rice you will define your preferred cook time; the longer it's cooked the more it opens.

Versatile? Check. Wild rice serves as a great base for rice bowls, casseroles, soups, salads, stuffings, and even appetizers and desserts. It adds flavor and antioxidant benefits when mixed with ground meats – try wild rice burgers (this and other recipes can be found in the world's largest wild recipe library at mnwildrice.org/search.php). Since it can be used in place of other rices and pastas, it will provide the diversity and versatility you're seeking when cooking at home.

To get you started, an all-time favorite is *Wild Company Chicken* – an ultimate comfort food recipe. It combines tender chicken breast, with water chestnuts, cream of mushroom soup, green pepper, thyme, and the distinctive flavor of wild rice, perfect for a stay-at-home meal.

If you'd like to familiarize yourself more with wild rice, visit mnwildrice.org where you'll find nutritional information including a comparison chart with white and brown rice, recipes, wild rice info and more. Adding wild rice to your repertoire will turn pantry, canned, and frozen food cooking into wildly delicious meals!

WILD COMPANY CHICKEN

- 1 pkg (apx. 1.7 lbs) boneless, skinless chicken breast fillets
salt and pepper, to taste
- 4 tbsp butter, divided
- 1 can (10¾ oz) Cream of Mushroom or Cream of Chicken soup
- ¾ cup white cooking wine (or chicken broth)
- 1 can (8 oz) sliced water chestnuts, drained
- 1 can (4 oz) sliced mushrooms, drained
- 4 tbsp chopped green pepper
- ¼ tsp crushed thyme
- 4 cups cooked wild rice

Preheat oven to 350°F. In large skillet, brown chicken with salt and pepper in 2 tbsp butter. Remove chicken, reserving drippings. In same skillet, add remaining butter, soup, wine or broth, chestnuts, mushrooms, green pepper, and thyme to reserved drippings; whisk till smooth. Bring to a boil; stirring occasionally. In 9x13 baking pan, layer wild rice, chicken, and sauce. Cover with foil; bake 25 minutes. Remove foil; bake 25-35 minutes. 8 servings.

Note: may be assembled the night before and refrigerated prior to baking. May want to double sauce if preparing the night before, pouring half the sauce on the night before and topping with remaining sauce just prior to baking.