Rice is a crucial component of many “South of the Border” recipes. Try some of these versions as a tasty addition to your Cinco de Mayo meals.

Cilantro Lime Rice

In a skillet, lightly brown:
1 cup white rice (not instant)  
1 Tb. oil  
½ cup finely diced onion

In a blender, mix:
1/3 bunch of cilantro (or you can just finely chop it with a knife)
½ tsp. salt  
2 cups low sodium chicken broth + 2 tsp. low sodium chicken boullion
1 clove minced garlic (can use jarred)  
zest of 1 fresh lime

Blend thoroughly. Add to the onion and rice. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cover. Simmer for 20 minutes. Squeeze in the juice from the zested lime and fluff with a fork.

Best Ever Spanish Rice

¼ cup butter or margarine  
1 cup boiling water  
2 cups uncooked INSTANT rice  
1 clove minced garlic (may use jarred)  
1 bay leaf  
1 tsp. sugar

1 — 14 oz. can diced tomatoes  
1 low sodium, beef boullion cubes  
1 medium onion, chopped

1 tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. black pepper

IN A SAUCEPAN OVER MEDIUM HEAT, MELT THE BUTTER. ADD THE RICE AND STIR UNTIL LIGHTLY BROWNED. ADD REMAINING INGREDIENTS AND BRING TO A BOIL. REDUCE HEAT. COVER AND SIMMER FOR 12-15 MINUTES UNTIL THE LIQUID IS ABSORBED AND RICE IS TENDER. REMOVE BAY LEAF BEFORE SERVING.

MAKES 4-6 SERVINGS.

FOR VERY, VERY EASY AND SIMPLE “SPANISH RICE”, SIMPLY ADD A CAN OF ROTEL BRAND TOMATOES (DICED TOMATOES AND GREEN CHILIES) TO SOME LEFTOVER RICE, HEAT UNTIL WARMED THROUGH. BE CAREFUL OF THE VARIETY OF TOMATOES YOU BUY. SOME ARE VERY SPICY. I USUALLY USE THE MILD OR ORIGINAL FLAVORS.

ANOTHER VERY EASY AND SIMPLE SPANISH RICE IS MADE BY COOKING INSTANT OR LONG GRAIN RICE WITH A FEW DRIED ONIONS. ADD A CAN (size according to the amount of rice you are using) OF LOW SODIUM SPICY V-8 JUICE TO THE COOKED RICE. YOU MAY ALSO ADD A ½ TSP. LOW SODIUM BEEF BOUILLION AND SOME FRESH OR DRIED CILANTRO BEFORE SERVING.

For more information, visit: CreateBetterHealth.usu.edu
For quick meals on busy nights, it is so helpful to have some of this “kicked up taco” meat on hand. It freezes well and can be used in a variety of dishes.

### Kicked up taco meat

- 3 lbs. lean ground beef
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 2 cups water
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 3/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/4 - 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

In a large skillet, cook the ground beef and the onions until no pink color remains. Drain well (rinse if desired). Add water and seasonings. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer uncovered until the water is absorbed (about 15 minutes).

(To lighten things up, you can easily replace the ground beef with ground turkey or chicken)

Create a taco pizza by making a pizza crust from the pizza crust recipe in the Easy Yeast Breads book from last week or by using a roll of refrigerated crescent rolls. Spread a little tomato sauce over the crust. Top with the taco meat, sliced tomatoes and cheese. After it is baked, top it with plenty of fresh veggies, thin pepper strips, more tomatoes, lettuce, onions, low fat sour cream etc.

### Impossible (Impossibly Easy) Taco Pie

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Grease a 9” pie plate. Spread 2 cups of the kicked up taco meat in the bottom. Mix 2 eggs, 1 cup milk and and 1/2 cup Bisquick or pancake mix until smooth. Pour over the meat in the plate. Bake about 25 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Sprinkle 3/4 cup shredded cheese on top and bake 10 minutes longer. May serve with salsa, guacamole or sour cream. Be sure to add a big tossed greed salad on the side!

(You could also add a can of whole kernel corn and a can of rinsed black or kidney beans to the meat to extend this dish)

Did you know that one can of drained beans equals about 1/2 - 3/4 cup beans? Beans are so EASY to prepare and is is much less expensive......follow the directions on the package for soaking and cooking. You may add 1 Tb. onion powder, 1 Tb. garlic powder, 1 Tb. cumin, 1 Tb. salt and 4-5 cups water to one cup of drained beans. Cook until beans are tender. Serve with a salad!
Pico De Gallo is simply a spice condiment made from tomatoes, onions and a jalapeno. Make some today to add to your favorite Mexican recipes, eggs, potatoes, etc.

**PICO DE GALLO**

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<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Ingredient</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Roma tomatoes</td>
<td>½ large or 1 small onion, chopped</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>jalapeno pepper, diced</td>
<td>½ lime</td>
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<td>salt to taste</td>
<td>cilantro</td>
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*Quantities are approximate*

Chop the tomatoes, onion and pepper into very small dice (remember that the veins and the seeds in the pepper contain the heat—wear gloves to handle...leave seeds in for a hotter pico) Discard the long stems of the cilantro and chop up a good sized bunch.....if you do not like the taste of cilantro, parsley may be used instead. Stir together. Add the juice of the ½ lime and salt to taste.

**ENCHILADA SAUCE**

No need to buy enchilada sauce if you do not have one on hand. It is very easy to make. Make a roux out of 2 Tb. flour and 2 Tb. butter, oil or margarine. When cooked and pasty, add 2 cups low sodium chicken or vegetable broth (boullion may be used). Whisk until smooth. Add 3-4 Tbs. Chili powder to taste. Add meat to the sauce 1-2 cups and serve in the Barbacoa style salad.

**Barbacoa Style Salad**

Popular restaurants use deeper dishes like tin foil pie plates to serve this salad in:

Layer:

1 warmed flour tortilla
1 large scoop of beans, canned or prepared cilantro lime rice
enchilada sauce with choice of meat
salad (torn lettuce, tomatoes, onions, etc.)
Tajini Mexican seasoning, optional
baked corn chip strips, optional for crunch
Creamy tomatillo Dressing

**CREAMY TOMATILLO DRESSING**

1 – 1 oz. pkg. DRY Ranch dressing mix
½ bunch minced cilantro
½ – 1 tsp. jalapeno, most seeds removed
1 cup mayo (not Miracle Whip)
1 large or 2 small tomatillos....they are green, sold by fresh tomatoes

Mix all ingredients in a food processor or blender. Store in the fridge for the flavors to meld. This dressing does get hotter as it sits...judge the jalapeno seeds accordingly.

Use on this salad and street or regular tacos, etc.