



## Growing and Eating Food Around the World: The Story of Rice

**Grade Levels & Subjects:** Grades 3-5 English Language Arts

**Learning + Food Objectives:**

Students will learn about food sources and origins by watching how rice is grown and cooked in different ways around the world and then writing a story about the journey of a grain of rice from field to plate from the point of view of the rice.

**Common Core Standards:**

Common Core English Language Arts

Writing a story using a narrator and specific point of view

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3-5.3.A](#)

Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.



### MATERIALS NEEDED

- “Arroz con Leche” with Chef Christopher Del Cid: <https://vimeo.com/417668558>
- Worksheet below - could be recreated in Jamboards, Pear Deck, or other online learning platform

### CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

#### INTRODUCTION (5-10 minutes)

1. Activate students’ background knowledge about rice, asking “Has anyone ever had rice? How did you eat it? Was it fried rice, rice and beans, chicken and rice, and/or in the school cafeteria? If students have difficulty thinking of specific dishes, teacher could show photos of common rice dishes on a slide/on the computer.



2. Teacher can list the different dishes (or show photos) and ask students where they have eaten these different types of rice dishes. This could be “at home, at a Mexican restaurant, with sushi, in the cafeteria...” No answer is wrong. If students are able to identify where a dish may have originated or is often eaten, that is great. Teacher could also prepare a few examples and where the dish originated. For example:
  - Sushi from Japan
  - Rice and beans from West Africa, Brazil, and many other countries
  - Fried rice from China
  - Paella from Spain
  - Arroz con Leche (Rice Pudding) from Spain and Latin American cultures
  - Chicken Tikka Masala with Rice from India
  - Tahdig from Iran
  - Risotto from Italy
3. After listing several examples, teacher can take a class poll (using chat features in video chat or thumbs up, thumbs down) to see how many people have had different types of rice dishes.

## INSTRUCTION (40 minutes)

1. Tell students how today they will learn more about rice and the different ways it can be eaten, starting with how rice is grown. Videos below are several examples about growing rice, both in the US (Missouri) and in other countries.
  - “How Rice is Made” video by Deutz-Fahr <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JqEse7JffE>
  - “Remarkable Ride: How Does Rice Grow?” (in the United Kingdom) by Tesco Eat Happy Project <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxAEiHCErSA>
  - “Missouri Rice Farming” by Missouri Farm Bureau <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orwWM33drJw>
2. Now that students understand a bit more about how rice is grown, think about how this one common ingredient is eaten in all sorts of ways around the world. Rice is a common ingredient in cooking in many countries and many cultures. It is a food that connects us!
3. Tell students that they are now going to watch a video about one way to prepare rice that is popular in Spanish and Latin American cooking: “Arroz con Leche” with Chef Christopher Del Cid: <https://vimeo.com/417668558>
4. Optionally, students (and/or the teacher) could learn more about the history of Arroz con Leche through research online or perhaps through students and students’ families.
5. Teacher and students will work together to write a short story about Arroz con Leche - *from the viewpoint of the rice* - starting from where it was grown to how it ended up in the Arroz con Leche! Let students know it’s important to think about the narrator of the story - and for this story, it will be a grain of rice!
6. Teacher can write the first part of the story modeling and with help from students. Teacher can then have students finish the story on their own. If they need help about the steps of Arroz con Leche, they can reference the video. (see example below). Teacher can model watching the video and then rewatching while pausing to take notes.



Example of modeled/teacher-led pre-writing and paragraph using information from this video: "How Rice is Made" video by Deutz-Fahr <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JqEse7JffE>

## **Pre-Writing Brainstorm:**

What are the steps of growing and harvesting rice?

1. Tractors make sure that the field is level with no bumps.
2. Rice seeds are planted in mud.
3. Rice is grown in fields called paddy fields that are covered with water.
4. The sun keeps the water and plants warm at night.
5. Plants sprout and grow.
6. Water is removed from the field.
7. A combine separates the stalks and the grains.
8. Grains are refined (milled or ground) and are ready to be eaten.

Example of first paragraph about growing rice from the viewpoint of a grain of rice:

## **The Story of a Grain of Rice in Arroz con Leche (students can be creative in the titles of their short stories)**

Before I was born, my farmers made sure the land where I would grow would be nice and flat. Then, when the field was a little wet, I was planted as a seed in the mud! You may not think that mud would be a good place to grow - but it's perfect for a rice plant like the one I came from! I grew up in a rice paddy which is a field that is flooded with water. This water is warmed by the sun during the day and keeps me nice and warm at night. Next, the rice plant I grew up on grew big and strong. After, the water was removed from my paddy and a big tractor called a combine picked all of the rice plants, including the one where I was growing. Then, a cool machine separated me and the other grains from the stalks - I missed the stalks, but I appreciated my freedom! Last, my outer shell was ground a little to make me ready for my next adventure and ready to be part of a delicious dish!

7. Optionally, depending on the ability level of the students and timing, teacher could model the story of a rice from field to plate and then have students choose their favorite rice dish and tell its "story."

## **CLOSING (teacher discretion)**

1. Students can share their findings with their stories with classmates. For older students, classmates could peer review their classmates' writing and offer feedback or ask questions. If appropriate, encourage students to take a photo the next time they eat rice. If they make a rice dish, ask them to also notice where the rice is from - this is usually listed on the bag of dry rice near the nutrition label as a "product of xx country".



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Everybody Cooks Rice* By Norah Dooley
- Informational texts on rice:
  - <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/rice/353717>
  - <https://easyscienceforkids.com/rice/>
- "Rice Facts for Kids" from Kiddle/Kids Encyclopedia Facts:  
<https://facts.kiddle.co/Rice#:~:text=Rice%20is%20usually%20planted%20in,while%20farming%20in%20other%20lands>
- "Bill Green's Growing Carolina Gold rice part 1 and 2" by Bill Green (Gullah Geechee)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmxC32YfCMQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3loGvTNqcY>

## RECIPE FROM VIDEO

Video: "Arroz con Leche" with Chef Christopher Del Cid: <https://vimeo.com/417668558>

Below is the recipe from the video in this lesson. Pilot Light Anywhere lessons are designed to be able to be delivered from a remote setting; however, this recipe can be demoed by the teacher virtually/in person, sent home to families, or used for reference.

### Arroz con Leche

*Serves 5*

#### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups of white rice (most white rice will do the trick!)
- 2 cups of water
- 1 ½ cups of milk (your choice of skim-whole)
- ¾ cup of evaporated milk
- ½ cup of condensed milk
- 1 Cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp of Vanilla extract
- Optional ingredients: ½ cup raisins, ½ tsp ground clove (or 2-3 whole), 1 star anise, and/or granulated sugar for sweetness
- Topping suggestions: feel free to get creative and make this your own, and serve in small bowls!
  - Banana slices, blueberries, strawberries, and peach slices
  - Dash of cinnamon and/or cocoa powder



Materials:

- Heat source
- Medium pot with lid
- 1 cup and ½ cup measuring cups
- 1 tsp measuring spoon
- Stirring spoon

Preparation:

1. First, make sure you clear your working area and that you've gathered all necessary ingredients.
2. Grab a medium pot and add the two cups of water, the rice, and the cinnamon stick.
3. Place a lid on the pot, set the heat on high, and wait until you bring the water to a boil.
4. When the water is boiling, bring the heat down to medium low and keep the lid closed.
5. Let the rice simmer for 10 minutes or until most of the water has evaporated.
6. Add 1 ½ cups of milk + the ¾ cups of evaporated milk + ½ cups of condensed milk + 1 tsp of vanilla extract.
  - If desired, this would be the time to add the ½ cup of raisins, the ½ tsp of ground clove (or whole clove), star anise, and/or sugar!
7. Using the stirring spoon, mix ingredients together gently as you're adding them, then continue to stir slowly, allowing the mixture to thicken. Allow about 8 minutes. Adjust the heat accordingly.
8. After those 8 minutes have passed, turn off the heat and allow the rice to sit and cool down, keeping the lid closed during this time. Wait about 10 minutes.
9. Serve and enjoy!

The student worksheet below can be printed or copied onto  
any online learning platform.





## The Story of Rice

As a class, we will write a story about how rice moves from the fields to our plate. We will write this from the point of view of a grain of rice! You will finish writing the story by describing how the grain of rice is made into Arroz con Leche or another rice dish!

### Pre-Writing Brainstorm:

What are the steps of growing and harvesting rice?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

What are the steps of the rice recipe?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.





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