

## Cook'n Couscous

What cooks like rice, looks like a grain, and is a type of pasta? Couscous! If you've never had couscous, you're in for a treat. Couscous has been a staple starch in North Africa for centuries.

Many cooks love its golden appearance and mild nutty flavor. And if you're not sure how to cook couscous or what couscous even is, you're in the right place. It's time to shine a spotlight on this pantry staple that is often overlooked!

Couscous is often treated as a grain, like rice, but it is actually a type of pasta made from semolina (durum wheat) flour. Couscous is made from a dry mixture of semolina and water that's rolled into very tiny, irregular pieces. Semolina is golden yellow and gives couscous a nuttier taste than pasta made with all-purpose flour. Keep in mind that couscous is made from wheat, so it's not gluten-free. The majority of couscous found in supermarkets is manufactured, pre-steamed, dried, and packaged.

Not all couscous is created equal! Learn what sets each type apart. There are three main types of couscous: Moroccan couscous, pearl couscous, and Lebanese couscous.

\* *Moroccan couscous* is the smallest type of couscous with small, irregular granules and cooks very quickly. The average cooking time for Moroccan couscous is about 5 minutes.

\* *Pearl couscous* (referred to as Israeli couscous) gets its name from its pearl-like appearance. It is about the size of peppercorns. Pearl couscous is toasted and has a nuttier flavor. Tri-color pearl couscous is a popular variety that gets its color and mild flavor from vegetables and spices. The average cooking time for pearl couscous is about 10 minutes.

\* *Lebanese couscous* is about the size of a pea. The average cooking time for Lebanese couscous is about 15 minutes.

Couscous has a mild, slightly nutty flavor with a soft texture. The granules are so tiny it is usually a pilaf-style dish, highly seasoned with spices and other flavorful ingredients, such as dried fruit, herbs, and nuts. Couscous pairs well with saucy or juicy meats and vegetables due to its ability to absorb the flavors of these ingredients.

The standard or tiny style has a more granular yet soft texture, while the larger pearl style is chewier, much like the pasta. When it comes to couscous recipes, be sure to double-check which version is suggested.

Couscous is a blank canvas that can take on any accompanying ingredients, seasonings, and sauces with which it is paired.

Once you've cooked your couscous, you have all sorts of options for using it! Here are a few:

- Add it to a salad.
- Serve it as a side dish.
- Top it with a stew.

- Make it a meal. Storage

Unopened couscous can be stored in a cool, dry place and can last up to a year past the printed date on the package. Once opened, pearl couscous should be used within six months of opening. Write the date you opened the package on the container to keep track of how long it's been in use.

Store cooked couscous in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Couscous can be frozen. Keep it plain for freezing; don't include other ingredients until serving.

To thaw, place the container in the refrigerator. You can also defrost frozen couscous by transferring it to a microwavable bowl and sprinkling it with a few tablespoons of water.

Couscous is the perfect addition to any side or main dish. Switch things up in the kitchen by trying different types of delicious ingredients.