

Sushi Rice

10 comments

We tasted eight versions of this global food staple in search of a product that balances fluffiness with chewiness and a hint of stickiness.

By Lauren Savoie

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Top Picks

WINNER

Lundberg Family Farms Organic California Sushi Rice



What You Need To Know

While we most often call for long-grain rice in our recipes, there's another rice variety that's a beloved pantry staple in many home kitchens: sushi (or japonica) rice. Often sold in the United States as Calrose rice, this rice variety features short, squat grains and has a distinct stickiness when cooked. It gets this stickiness from a relatively high amount of a starch called amylopectin, which gelatinizes during cooking and results in a tender, creamy texture with a subtle starchiness.

Sushi rice traces its origins back to northeast Asia (particularly Japan), but it is now grown extensively in the United States. California, where 95 percent of the rice grown is sushi-style rice, ranks second to Arkansas (which grows mostly long-grain rice) in U.S. rice production. In fact, according to the California Rice Commission, nearly every piece of sushi eaten in the United States is made with California-grown rice. This style of rice is a staple in countless dishes, including bibimbap, onigiri, and gimbap.

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Everything We Tested

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

WINNER

Lundberg Family Farms Organic California Sushi Rice



This rice, made by the same company that produces our favorite long-grain rice, was praised for its “small,” “sticky” grains, which were the shortest of all the products we tried. Tasters thought that the “distinct,” “bead-like” granules and “floral aroma” truly set this product apart. However, its rating bombed when we tried it prepared according to its package instructions: It was “wet,” “watery,” and “bland” from the double whammy

of a 30-minute soak and a high proportion of water to rice. While we ultimately loved this “pleasant,” “aromatic” rice when cooked in the rice cooker or according to our recipe, we don’t recommend following the instructions on the package.

Length-to-width ratio: 1.6 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$4.49 for 32 oz (\$0.14 per oz)

RECOMMENDED

Sushi Chef Premium Sushi Rice



While this product had longer granules than our winning rice, tasters still thought that it had “good cohesion without any gumminess.” The grains were “distinct” and “slick,” with a perfect amount of “chew.” It also had “floral” notes and a slightly “earthy” “coconut” flavor that tasters found “subtle” and “pleasing.”

Length-to-width ratio: 2.1 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$4.19 for 20 oz (\$0.21 per oz)

Botan Calrose Rice



This rice had “longer,” “thinner” grains than we expect in sushi rice, but tasters thought it cooked up “perfectly sticky” with a “good amount of chew.” We didn’t detect any interesting aromas in this rice; overall it was a bit “bland,” but it would still make a good base for stir-fries.

Length-to-width ratio: 2.2 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$8.09 for 80 oz (\$0.10 per oz)

Golden Star Calrose Rice



\$4.67 for 80 oz
(\$0.06 per oz)

This rice had a “neutral,” “clean” flavor with subtle “toasty,” “buttery” afternotes. A few tasters thought that it “lacked the stickiness” we prize in this type of rice and instead had “firm,” “distinct” grains. Though the texture was a bit “too al dente,” most agreed it had a “balanced,” “almost sweet” flavor.

Length-to-width ratio: 2.2 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$4.67 for 80 oz (\$0.06 per oz)

Kyong Gi Medium Grain Rice



\$6.99 for 70.4 oz
(\$0.10 per oz)

This Korean American rice had an “earthy” flavor and a slightly “fruity aftertaste.” Most agreed that its “pleasant floral notes” added a unique aroma to the rice. The grains were “sticky” and “moist” and seemed “slightly longer” than other products.

Length-to-width ratio: 2.2 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$6.99 for 70.4 oz (\$0.10 per oz)

Nishiki Premium Medium Grain Rice



With some of the longest grains of the products we tried, this rice tricked a few tasters into thinking we had mixed long-grain rice into the lineup. While some tasters wanted shorter grains, many still liked this product’s “moderate firmness” and “chew.” A few tasters also noted that the rice was “bland” compared with other more fragrant products.

Length-to-width ratio: 2.1 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$4.99 for 32 oz (\$0.16 per oz)

RiceSelect Sushi Rice



Though this product had some of the shortest grains in the lineup and tasters liked its “extra-short and round” granules, many thought that it had a slightly “chewy” texture. However, we liked its “roasty,” “toasted” notes and “buttery” aftertaste, which reminded some tasters of “rice crackers.” Overall, it was a “flavorful” rice but “a bit dry.”

Length-to-width ratio: 1.7 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$7.99 for 32 oz (\$0.25 oz)

Kokuho Rose Japanese Style Rice



With a slightly “buttery” aftertaste that tasters enjoyed, this rice got full marks for flavor, but it fell a bit short on texture. Many noted that this product was somewhat “dry,” with an al dente bite that was reminiscent of Arborio rice.

Length-to-width ratio: 2.1 to 1

Price at Time of Testing: \$3.59 for 32 oz (\$0.11 per oz)