

# THE STORAGE OF RICE

Of all the natural foods that exist, rice is near the top of list when it comes to storage and shelf life. This text covers some of the factors that need to be taken into account so that normal consumers can obtain all the benefits in this respect.

## BACKGROUND

It is no accident that rice has for many centuries been the most important staple food for a large proportion of the world's population. Rice is a good source of energy despite its low protein content; a shortfall that newly-bred, higher-protein varieties of rice are now beginning to address. It is more than 75% carbohydrate, apart from being rich in minerals. When considered in combination with its above-average shelf life, rice can thus be seen as an ideal food for stockpiling.

## SHELF LIFE OF DIFFERENT VARIETIES

Different types of rice are characterised by their varying shelf-life properties. The basic principle is that the more layers are removed in the rice mill, the longer the shelf life of the rice concerned. The storage life of unmilled paddy rice and brown rice is limited by the higher fat and protein content of these varieties. The milling, or polishing, of rice to make it white removes the silvery outer skin (the aleurone layer) and the nutritionally-rich grain germ. This increases the shelf life of rice, but at the cost of losing a large proportion of its nutrients. Parboiled rice represents an attempt to reduce this loss by means of a special process that involves the de-husking, soaking and steam treatment of paddy rice. In this process, pressure is applied in order to retain inside the grain the water-soluble nutrients, vitamins and minerals that are contained in the aleurone layer. This means that the nutrients are conserved even after the rice has been polished.

## OPTIMUM STORAGE

Rice is basically subject to the same storage requirements as any other grain product. It should wherever possible be kept in

- **COOL**
- **DRY**
- **DARK**

conditions. If the rice is still in its original packaging, it should also be stored there if possible, or – failing that – in a dry, tightly-sealed container. Rice should also be kept well away from sources of strong smells, as it is likely to absorb such odours very quickly. Depending on its variety, and subject to the above conditions being applied, rice can be stored for up to three years. The “use by” date on the packaging should be observed in this respect.

