

Sesame Almond Brown Rice Balls

Because brown rice has all the stuff that can go rancid still intact - bran/germ, if you can find organic rice labeled "new crop", go with that. And, in case you want to make a larger pot of rice, use ~1 1/2 cups / 360 ml water for each cup of rice - perhaps a splash more.

2 cups / 14 oz / 400 g brown sushi rice (stubby, short grains)

3 cups / 710 ml water

1/2 teaspoon fine grain sea salt

1/4 cup / 1.5 oz / 45 g sesame seeds (white/black mix)

3 tablespoons toasted almond slices/slivers, chopped

1/4 cup / 4 tablespoons minced green onions

Optional: things to tuck in the middle: avocado cubes (toss in lemon juice first), tofu, etc.

In a colander or fine-mesh strainer, rinse the rice briefly and drain. If you have time to soak the rice for an hour or two, do it. If not, just proceed. Bring the rice to a boil over medium-high heat in your thickest-bottomed pot. Dial the heat back so the water is just simmering actively - low-med. Cover with tight fitting lid, and try not to peek too often.

Cook the rice until the water has been absorbed and the grains are cooked through, usually about an hour, less if you've soaked the rice. If the grains have cooked but there's still water to be absorbed, dial the heat up to medium-high until the pan dries out, being careful not to scorch the rice at the bottom. Remove the rice from heat and let rest, covered, for at least 15 minutes, preferably a bit longer. Fluff with a fork, then gradually add and incorporate the sesame seeds, almonds, and green onions. At this point, taste, and adjust the seasoning, adding more salt if needed. I let the rice cool quite a bit before shaping.

To form the rice balls, line a small cup with plastic wrap, sprinkle the plastic wrap with a dab of water, then fill the cup 2/3 full with rice mixture. No need to pack it down. You can tuck something in the center at this point if you like. Gather the plastic wrap like you would a ponytail, and twist at the base of the rice. Make sure there is no air trapped, and use your opposite palm to shape into a ball (see photo up above). Carefully remove plastic wrap and set the rice ball in a parchment lined container or on a plate. Repeat with the remaining rice.

A couple tips: If your fingers get sticky, dab with water. And if you run out of steam making rice balls, just cook up a couple eggs into a thin omelette, cut into shreds, and toss with the rice - makes for one of my favorite quick lunches.

Makes about 2 dozen small rice balls.

