Tomato, Basil and Mozzarella Rice Bowls

2 light rice bowls, each with half the rice, tomatoes, beans and 40 g (about 1.4 oz) mozzarella | Active 10 min | Cook 8 min | Total 22 min

Ingredients

- 1 commercially packed 250 g (about 8.8 oz) ready-to-eat plain rice pouch, with a complete microwave process of 2 minutes or less at 1000 W
- 250 g (about 8.8 oz) fresh cherry tomatoes, washed and halved
- 160 g (about 5.6 oz) ready-to-eat canned white beans, drained and rinsed
- 80 g (about 2.8 oz) fresh mozzarella, drained and cut into 1 cm (about 3/8 in) pieces
- 6 g (about 1/4 US cup loosely packed leaves before tearing) fresh basil leaves, torn
- 10 ml (about 2 US tsp) olive oil
- 10 ml (about 2 US tsp) lemon juice
- 1 g (about 1/8 US tsp plus a small pinch) fine salt
- 0.2 g (a small pinch) ground black pepper

Set out

1000 W microwave with turntable, Microwave-safe bowl, 1.5 L (about 1.6 US qt) capacity, Microwave-safe vented cover, Knife and board, Spoon, Kitchen scale and measuring spoon, Food thermometer, Oven mitts, Scissors only if the rice package requires them, Two serving bowls

Allergens

Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Put the tomatoes, olive oil, salt and pepper in the 1.5 L (about 1.6 US qt) bowl. Cover with the vented cover. Microwave at 1000 W full power for 2 minutes, stir, then cook 1-2 minutes more until the tomatoes are softened and have released juices.

2. Add the beans, stir well and cover again. Microwave at full power for 1-2 minutes, stirring halfway through, until the center and other tested spots reach 165°F/74°C. Leave covered outside the oven for 2 minutes.

3. During that stand, heat the full 250 g (about 8.8 oz) rice pouch by all its manufacturer’s instructions, including venting and any required standing time. Do not use raw rice or shorten a longer package cook. Open carefully to avoid steam.

4. Stir all the hot rice into the tomato-bean bowl with the lemon juice. Divide the complete mixture between two bowls. Add 40 g (about 1.4 oz) mozzarella and 3 g torn basil to each, distributing them through the hot rice, and serve immediately.

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The package has the final word

The rice pouch’s full cooking and venting instructions apply. There is no invented universal 90-second shortcut for every brand.

A visible cold finish

The 80 g (about 2.8 oz) mozzarella and 6 g basil are all divided between the two bowls after heating. They are part of the meal, not additional unmeasured garnishes.

Ingredient labels

Check rice-pouch and bean labels for any additional ingredients or allergens. The tofu variation contains soy.

A useful detail

The 22-minute estimate includes preparation, up to 6 minutes for the tomato-bean base and up to 2 minutes for the chosen rice pouch. The rice heats during the base’s 2-minute stand; its own required stand can add time if the package needs it. Times are starting ranges for a 1000 W microwave. Use the stated power setting, stir and turn as directed, and use the food endpoint rather than the clock alone. A different wattage or bowl shape may need additional short bursts.

Another way

Use a 250 g (about 8.8 oz) ready-to-eat plain brown rice pouch with a comparable full package process. A dry brown-rice packet is not equivalent.

Replace mozzarella with 80 g (about 2.8 oz) ready-to-eat pasteurized firm tofu cut into small pieces. Soy replaces milk as an allergen; check that the tofu label permits ready-to-eat use.

Keep it well

Best eaten as soon as assembled. If saving a portion, divide it into a shallow container and refrigerate quickly, ideally within 1 hour of heating the rice, at 40°F/4°C or below. Use within 24 hours or sooner if the rice label requires it, and eat cold: the rice has already had its reheating stage in this recipe, so do not reheat these leftovers again. Adding tomatoes or cheese does not restart the rice clock.