

# Insalata di Riso

Serves 6-8 | 20 minutes prep + 15 minutes cook time

In August Italians celebrate the 2000 year old holiday called Ferragosto, and for many that includes rice salad. Emperor Augustus decreed the first day of his eponymous month a day of rest to follow the harvest, and the Catholic Church later moved the pagan holiday to the 15th to coincide with the assumption. Insalata di riso, Italian rice salad, came along much later.

Rice was introduced to Italy in the 1500s but wasn't grown on a large scale until the mid-1800s. Its connection to the summer holiday likely dates to Mussolini's introduction in the late '20s of the "People's Trains of Ferragosto," cheap August train tickets to give the peninsula's poor a chance for a vacation. The budget rail pass didn't include the usual meal, so food that could travel for a day or two was packed for the trip. Traditionally made from a few pantry ingredients supplemented with cheese and salami, insalata di riso was perfect for the warm weather ride to the beach or mountains.

Italian versions traditionally combine good canned tuna with cubed ham or a salami like mortadella along with a soft cheese, but you can leave either or both out for a vegetable-centric salad. And while preserved vegetables packed in oil or vinegar are classic, feel free to add whatever looks good from your garden or the farmers market.

**2 cups cooked rice\***

**½ cup cooked ham or mortadella salami, cut into ½ inch cubes**

**1 can Albacore**

**3-4 ounces soft Italian-style cheese, Ferradale fior di latte, cut into ½ inch cubes**

**3-4 Hellenic Farms Greek green peppers, chopped**

**2-3 Hellenic Farms Greek red roasted peppers, chopped**

**3 tablespoons RGF salt-packed capers**

**½ cup frozen peas**

**Large handful of flat-leaf parsley, mint, or a combination, chopped**

**3 tablespoons Katz Trio red wine vinegar**

**4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil - Antheo D.O.P.**

**Fine Sea Salt to taste**

**Step 1** Let the cooked rice cool slightly, then add the other ingredients and toss to combine.

**Optional and desirable additions and substitutions** A classic insalata di riso always includes good canned tuna and some kind of cured pork product. While ham, aka prosciutto cotto in Italy, is the most common, fine-grained salume like mortadella or even hot dogs (called by their German name, würstel, in Italy) are perfect, too.

Other pantry items to consider include jarred pickled vegetables and canned artichokes. Chopped olives and a couple of hard-boiled eggs are welcome additions, and some Pantellerian oregano and Greek thyme flowers compliment the fresh herbs.

\*About ¾ cup of uncooked rice yields roughly 2 cups cooked, and we prefer the cook-it-like-pasta technique. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil, add the rice, and cook at an active boil for 11 minutes for long-grain white rice like the Carolina Gold, 35 minutes for Koda Farms Kokuho Rose brown rice.