

A woman sells rice from large bags at a Hanoi outdoor market

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A woman sells varieties of white rice from three large paper bags at a Hanoi outdoor market. She wears a palm leaf sunhat, a print blouse, and a string of dark beads. A round woven basket in front contains black rice or dark beans for sale. In some Southeast Asian regions, black and red rice varieties are grown. When cooked, white rice is sometimes colored yellow with tumeric in curries or just for the coloring effect.

In some rituals, these four colors of of cooked rice symbolize the four cardinal directions, and small amounts are offered to the gods of all the universe.

Rice is considered the most important daily food in the diets of most Southeast Asians. Generally it is eaten as the centerpiece of every meal, which may be two or three times a day, depending on the region and residents' wealth. Wherever rice will grow in Southeast Asia, it is grown. Rice is one of the most nutritious and protein-rich grains that humans have domesticated from wild plants.



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