

Chinese thumbs up for GM rice (Sat 30 Apr, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about: rice / genetically modified (GM) food / pesticides / farmers / Chinese produce / food safety ... Change topics and partners frequently.

RICE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with rice. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

VERSATILE: Rice has many, many uses and is one of the most versatile foods in the world. Write down the different ways you know of using rice in food. Add them to the list below. Which of them sound delicious and which sound strange or disgusting?

- a. boiled rice mixed with hot tea (a Japanese dish)
- b. rice for breakfast
- c. rice and curry
- d. savory rice crackers
- e. rice cakes
- f. rice balls with a pickled plum inside
- g. paella / risotto / gratin
- h. sake
- i. rice baked in milk and sugar (English dessert)
- j. a strawberry encased in sweetened pounded rice (Japanese sweet)
- k. other

STAPLE FOOD COMPARISON: Look at these staple foods from around the world. Circle the ones you know. Talk with your partner about how important they are to you. Research the ones you don't know:

bananas / pasta / cassava / tapioca / lentils / rice / bread / beans / sorghum / potato / yams

“HI! I’M RICE”: You have suddenly become a staple food. You are at a staple food party. With your new stable food character, introduce yourself to other staple foods (your classmates) and talk about your life as rice / bread / cassava etc.

2-MINUTE RICE DEBATES: Face each other in pairs and engage in the following fun 2-minute debates. Students A take the first argument, students B the second. Rotate pairs to ensure a lively pace and noise level is kept:

- a. Rice is better than bread. vs. Bread is better than rice.
- b. Brown rice is nicest. vs. White rice is nicest.
- c. American rice is tastiest. vs. Indian / Thai / Japanese rice is tastiest.
- d. Boiled rice is best. vs. Fried rice is best.
- e. Rice pudding (rice baked in milk and sugar) is delicious. vs. It sounds bad.
- f. Boiled rice is great for breakfast. vs. Boiled rice is best for dinner.
- g. Rice is more versatile than potatoes. vs. Potatoes are ten times more versatile.
- h. Rice is boring. vs. You must be joking.
- i. Fluffy rice is nicer. vs. Sticky rice is best.

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PRE-READING

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'research' and 'project'.

TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true or false:

- a. China has asked the General Motors car company to grow rice. T / F
- b. Chinese people have voted to allow the use of GM rice. T / F
- c. Chinese research showed genetically modified rice to be good for farmers. T / F
- d. Insects love GM rice. T / F
- e. Farmers using GM rice increased their rice crop by 90 per cent. T / F
- f. Pesticides in China kill 500 farmers every year. T / F
- g. China's government has given GM rice the thumbs up. T / F
- h. Farmers in developing countries would not want GM rice. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | | |
|----|------------------|-------------|
| a. | research project | changed |
| b. | published | statistics |
| c. | looked into | deaths |
| d. | modified | study |
| e. | data | grew |
| f. | produced | green light |
| g. | fatalities | printed |
| h. | thumbs up | researched |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|----------------------------|
| a. | research | use |
| b. | published in | crops |
| c. | natural | less money on pesticides |
| d. | insect | the journal <i>Science</i> |
| e. | rice | resistant |
| f. | spent eight times | project |
| g. | commercial | thumbs up |
| h. | give it the | varieties of rice |

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READING:

ODD WORD OUT: Circle the word in each group of three (in italics) that does not fit.

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BNE: A ten-year research project in China has *produced / come up with / grown* some good news for Chinese farmers. The study, which was published in the journal *Science* on April 29, looked into the *abuse / use / advantages* of genetically modified (GM) rice. Natural varieties of rice were compared with genetically modified varieties. The GM rice was *modified / altered / destroyed* so that it was naturally insect-resistant. *Data / statistics / numerals* showed that farmers using GM rice crops produced nine per cent more rice, spent eight times less money on *pesticides / insecticides / suicides*, and were healthier. Pesticides poison up to 50,000 Chinese farmers a year, with 500 fatalities. The leader of the research team, Dr Huang Jikun, believes GM rice is safe for commercial use. He hopes his research will *convince / brainwash / persuade* the Chinese government to give it the *thumbs up / green light / green thumb*. If this happens, it could change farming worldwide. The price of rice would fall and farmers in developing countries could grow more food.

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DISCUSSION

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. Did anything in the article surprise you?
- c. Did anything in the article worry you?
- d. What do you think of the idea of GM rice?
- e. Do you think genetically modified food is a good thing?
- f. What are the arguments for and against GM food?
- g. George W. Bush says GM crops would mean African farmers could grow more food. What do you think of this?
- h. Is genetically modifying food similar to cloning animals?
- i. Are scientists genetically modifying us when they genetically modifying our food?
- j. GM food is new. We don't know the long term effects. Is this dangerous?
- k. Do you think GM crops will change the environment?
- l. Are you a big rice lover?
- m. Is rice important in your life?
- n. Could you live without rice?
- o. What is the best way to eat rice?
- p. Would you buy GM rice grown in China?
- q. Which country produces the tastiest rice?
- r. Should rice be baked in milk and sugar, with perhaps cinnamon, raisins or even strawberry jam added, as with British rice pudding?
- s. Did you like this discussion?
- t. Teacher / Student additional questions.

OPINIONS: In pairs / groups, write down the opinions of the following people or creatures on GM rice. Change partners and exchange opinions. Talk about whether or not you agree with these opinions.

- a. farmer
- b. an organic vegetable grower
- c. a Greenpeace supporter
- d. a poor person
- e. a scientist
- f. a wild animal that lives on farms
- g. an insect that eats the crops on the farms
- h. a supermarket owner

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HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on rice. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. STAPLE FOOD:** Research staple foods from around the world. Show where different staples are grown around the world and the different ways they are used.
- 4. FARMER:** Imagine you are a farmer somewhere in the world. Write a letter to your government explaining your opinions on genetically modified crops.

TEXT: The odd words out are underlined

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