

## In Search of Flavor

Eating the same thing every week can wear on a person. Too much routine dulls their sense of excitement. Repetition is common in prison; menus vary little from year to year. Inmates have inventive and sometimes bizarre ways of dealing with the lack of variety. How many ways can you think of to spice up rice and beans, noodles, and bread?

Prisoners devote time and energy to pursue tasty dishes. In this article, I will divulge some of their secrets. You may find some of them disturbing; others may sound intriguing. In either case, I hope you are entertained.

Rice and beans are bland; yet, they can transform into delicious dishes. Common ways to add flavor to them are by putting in onions, tomatoes, and peppers. Less known remedies are adding cool aid or coffee creamer. Still more inventive is to combine all the above with a Top Ramon soup. The concoction often fills burritos.

Noodles are a staple for inmates. The prison serves them in the dining hall and we purchase them for ourselves at the canteen. In both situations, it is because of their relatively cheap price. The question is how to make them interesting. One such example of the inventiveness of inmates is to take a Chile Soup packet and a green apple and add them together into the noodles. The result is a new take on an old dish.

Bread shows up on our trays too often. The question is what to do with it. Common themes are to role it up in balls or flatten it out to make it more appealing. Some men open the packages and let the slices sit out for a day or two until they begin to become crusty. Inmates also sprinkle cool aid on top of them for flavor. Prisoners will try just about anything to gain more variety in their food choices.

I have briefly described for you some of the ways inmates try to spice up their meals. The examples written here are ones that almost any inmate can do for himself. The options become much greater for those who have the financial backing of friends or family on the streets. Many possibilities become available to those who receive quarterly packages.

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