Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook Time: 25 minutes | Total Time: 40 minutes

Servings: 4 | Difficulty: Easy | Intensity Level: Low–Moderate

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Introduction

The burrito bowl is one of the most versatile and satisfying meals you can make at home. It takes everything you love about a burrito — the seasoned protein, the fluffy rice, the creamy toppings, the fresh salsa — and serves it all in a bowl, no tortilla required. This homemade

version is fresher, healthier, and more affordable than takeout, and it comes together in under an hour.

This recipe is designed to be flexible. Whether you're cooking for a family on a busy weeknight, meal-prepping for the week ahead, or hosting a casual dinner where everyone builds their own bowl, this recipe delivers bold flavor with minimal effort.

Ingredients

For the Cilantro-Lime Rice

- 1 cup long-grain white rice (or brown rice)
- 2 cups water (or chicken/vegetable broth for extra flavor)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice (about 1 lime)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

For the Seasoned Protein (Choose One)

- Chicken option: 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces
- Beef option: 1 lb ground beef (85% lean)
- Vegetarian option: 1 can (15 oz) black beans, drained and rinsed, plus 1 can (15 oz) corn kernels

For the Seasoning Mix

- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon salt

- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Pinch of cayenne pepper (optional, for heat)

For the Toppings

- 1 cup shredded lettuce (romaine or iceberg)
- 1 cup diced tomatoes (or pico de gallo)
- ½ cup shredded Mexican-blend cheese (or cheddar)
- ½ cup sour cream or plain Greek yogurt
- 1 avocado, sliced
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- Salsa or hot sauce, to taste

Equipment Needed

- Medium saucepan with lid
- Large skillet
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Cutting board and knife
- Mixing bowl (for the seasoning)
- Serving bowls

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Cook the Rice (Time: 20–25 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Rinse the rice under cold water until the water runs clear — this removes excess starch and keeps the grains fluffy. In a medium saucepan, combine the rinsed rice, water (or broth), olive oil, and 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 18–20 minutes (or according to package directions). Do not lift the lid while cooking. Once the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed, remove from heat and let it sit, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork, then stir in the fresh lime juice and chopped cilantro. Set aside.

Step 2: Prepare the Seasoning Mix (Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

While the rice cooks, combine all the seasoning ingredients in a small bowl and mix well. This blend is the heart of the recipe — smoky, warm, and aromatic. Set it aside.

Step 3: Cook the Protein (Time: 8–12 minutes | Intensity: Moderate)

For chicken: Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken pieces and cook for 6–8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until browned and cooked through (internal temperature should reach 165°F/74°C). Sprinkle the seasoning mix over the chicken and stir to coat evenly. Add 2–3 tablespoons of water to the pan and cook for another 1–2 minutes until a thick sauce forms.

For beef: Heat the skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef and cook for 5–7 minutes, breaking it apart with a spatula, until browned. Drain excess fat if needed. Add the seasoning mix and ¼ cup of water, then simmer for 2–3 minutes until the beef is evenly coated and saucy.

For vegetarian: Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in the skillet over medium heat. Add the black beans and corn, then sprinkle with the seasoning mix. Cook for 4–5 minutes, stirring gently, until heated through and well coated. Add 2 tablespoons of water if the mixture looks dry.

Step 4: Prepare the Toppings (Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

While the protein cooks, wash and chop the lettuce, dice the tomatoes, slice the avocado, and cut the lime into wedges. Shred the cheese if it isn’t pre-shredded. Arrange all toppings in small bowls or on a platter for easy assembly.

Step 5: Assemble the Bowls (Time: 3 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Divide the cilantro-lime rice evenly among four serving bowls. Top each bowl with a portion of

the seasoned protein, followed by the lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, sour cream (or Greek yogurt), and avocado slices. Garnish with fresh cilantro, a squeeze of lime juice, and salsa or hot sauce to taste.

Step 6: Serve and Enjoy (Time: 1 minute | Intensity: Low)

Serve immediately while warm. These bowls are also excellent at room temperature, making them ideal for packed lunches.

Recipe Timing Summary

Stage	Time	Intensity
Prep ingredients	15 min	Low
Cook rice	20–25 min	Low
Make seasoning	2 min	Low
Cook protein	8–12 min	Moderate
Prepare toppings	5 min	Low
Assemble bowls	3 min	Low
Total	~40 min	Low–Moderate

Tips for Success

- Meal prep: Double the recipe and store components separately in airtight containers in the fridge for up to 4 days. Reheat the rice and protein, and add fresh toppings just before eating.

- Rice texture: Rinsing the rice and letting it rest covered after cooking are the two

secrets to restaurant-quality rice.

- Heat control: Adjust the cayenne and hot sauce to your preferred spice level. Add a diced jalapeño to the toppings for extra kick.
- Make it dairy-free: Skip the cheese and sour cream, or swap in dairy-free alternatives.
- Make it vegan: Use the vegetarian protein option and omit the cheese and sour cream (or use plant-based versions).

Nutrition Information (Per Serving)

Approximate values based on the chicken option with all toppings, calculated for 4 servings.

- Calories: 620 kcal
- Protein: 38 g
- Carbohydrates: 52 g
- Dietary Fiber: 8 g
- Sugars: 6 g

- Fat: 28 g
- Saturated Fat: 9 g
- Cholesterol: 100 mg
- Sodium: 980 mg
- Potassium: 850 mg