

# Sanyo launches first rice bread cooker

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A woman displays the world's first cooker that can turn rice grains into bread. The machine -- dubbed "GOPAN" by Japanese electronics maker Sanyo -- can mill a cup of rice grains into rice flour, then mixes it with water, gluten, yeast and other ingredients to bake a loaf of bread in four hours.

Japan's consumer electronics maker Sanyo has launched the world's first cooker that can turn rice grains into bread -- an innovation that it hopes will be a hit across Asia.

The machine can mill a cup of rice grains into rice flour, then mixes it with water, gluten, [yeast](#) and other ingredients to bake a loaf of [bread](#) in four hours, [Sanyo Electric](#) said.

The machine is named "GOPAN" in Japan -- coined from "gohan",

meaning cooked rice, and "pan", Spanish for bread. Sanyo will start exporting it to other Asian countries next year after its Japanese launch in October.

"We are eagerly working to export this to other Asian countries, mainly China and Southeast [Asia](#), which share the culture of growing rice," said company spokeswoman Liu Yingying.

The machine would retail between 50,000 and 60,000 yen (560-670 dollars).

Wheat-free bread is good for people allergic to the grain, Sanyo said, noting that the machine can also operate without using gluten, which is taken from wheat and helps dough to rise.

Sanyo argued that another benefit would be that in Japan the cooker would increase rice consumption and change people's [eating habits](#), helping increase the country's low food self-sufficiency ratio.

Japan, the world's second-largest economy, now produces only 40 percent of its food and buys almost all its wheat, corn and soy beans from overseas.

The country grows enough rice for domestic consumption, thanks to heavy trade protection, but annual consumption of the staple per person has halved since the 1960s as people's diets have diversified.

The market for "home bakery", or home-use bread-making machines, has boomed in Japan in the recent years, with shipments rising 30.7 percent in 2009 from the previous year to 438,000 units, according to industry data.

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