

Risotto with Butternut Squash, Pancetta

Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

- 6 cups vegetable stock
- Extra virgin olive oil to taste
- 2 oz. onion, finely chopped (optional)
- 1 clove of garlic, crushed,
- ¾ lb. Carnaroli or Arborio rice
- ½ cup white wine
- 8 oz. butternut squash, peeled and cut into ¼ inch dice
- 1 oz. butter
- 2 leaves wild sage,
- 2 oz. grated parmesan cheese
- 1 oz. Gorgonzola cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 oz. Watson Lake Inn cured pancetta, thick cut and crispy baked



Preparation

1. Bring the broth to a boil.
2. Place the bacon on a baking tray and place in a preheated oven at 350F, bake until crisp
3. Drain off the bacon fat and cut crosswise into ¼” strips, set aside.
4. Sauté the onion and garlic in a saucepan with hot olive oil and a pinch of salt. Lower the heat to keep the onion from browning. **Soffritto.**
5. When it is translucent, turn up the heat and add the rice. Toast the rice for a couple of minutes, stirring constantly. **Tostatura.**
6. Add a little salt while continuing to stir, add the white wine. Once the wine has evaporated, add one cup of broth.
7. Continue to cook the risotto by adding more broth (1/2 cup at a time) when the rice begins to look dry.
8. Add the butternut squash and minced sage after 10 minutes.
9. Stir continuously. After about 16-18 minutes, the rice should be al dente.
10. Remove it from the heat and add the butter, cut into pieces. **Descanso.**
11. Cover and let sit for a couple of minutes. Add the Parmigiano Reggiano and butter. **Mantecatura.**
12. Mix well until the cheese has melted. Garnish with the gorgonzola, crisp bacon and grated black pepper.

Making risotto is not particularly hard:

Rice, water, ingredient, time, right? Well, not quite. The route to risotto perfection is scattered with obstacles, but these five steps will make your dish an impeccable one!

Step 1: Soffritto

Every great risotto starts with a good soffritto: sautéing onions in butter or olive oil. Butter is really for it to taste better, but olive oil is what I usually use... At this stage, you will also want to add ingredients that are particularly “sturdy”, e.g. will be able to sustain cooking at high temperatures for almost 20 minutes. Not many ingredients are in this category, other than dried mushrooms and meat

Step 2: Tostatura

Tostatura comes from the verb meaning “to toast” and it refers to the rice grains. You will add your rice to the soffritto with no liquid, so that each grain gets warmed up. This is where picking the right rice becomes really important! Tostatura will ensure uniform cooking of the grain, so it’s a fairly important step. Make sure all the rice is nicely toasted, and then you can add a glass of wine and stir till it evaporates completely before moving to the next step.

Step 3: Stock

First of all, don’t use water- use stock. Stock that is flavorful and it will ensure a perfect end result, and it can be prepared in just 20 minutes if you have shrimps shells (for fish stock), chicken bones or just a few vegetables to throw in a pot. It’s seriously worth your time.

Stock will be added slowly, one ladle at the time, and replenished when it is almost completely absorbed by the rice. Stock addition needs to be accompanied by continuous stirring, so that the temperature is maintained constant and each grain gets the same exposure.

The important part of risotto comes in about 2 thirds of the way in the cooking process: asparagus (the harder stems can be added at the beginning, the softer tips at this stage), peas, fresh mushrooms- your only boundary is availability of ingredients, as almost anything can be paired in a risotto!

Step 4: Descanso (Resting)

In order to prepare risotto for serving, you first need to give it a break. This means taking the rice off the heat when the rice grains are still a bit al dente and let it rest, without stirring. The process allows the temperature to come down and to prepare risotto for the last and most important step of them all.

Step 5: Mantecatura

Manteca is Spanish for butter. It is said that this process was originally adopted during the Spanish ruling of Lombardia during the Renaissance. At this stage, you will do what you can to emulsify the rice and give its creamy consistence that makes for a great risotto all’onda- beat in really cold butter cubes and cheese (most of the times Parmigiano) till you reach the right texture.

Enjoy!