

Asparagus Risotto

serves 6–8

Risotto is a simple, rich, and delicious treat. Great risotto should be creamy, but still firm, with a few simple but compelling ingredients. There are three types of rice: arborio (the softest), vialone nano (the firmest), and carnaroli (my favorite choice). Try all three and see which you like the best!

1 T. olive oil
1 c. 1/8" thick leek half-moon slices
1 bunch (1 to 1 1/2 lb.) asparagus,
1" diagonal slices
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. fresh ground black pepper
2 to 4 T. white wine or 1 T. white
wine vinegar

1 1/4 c. arborio, carnaroli, or
vialone nano rice
1 T. additional olive oil
1/4 c. heavy cream
5 to 6 c. rich vegetable stock, hot
1/4 c. fresh grated parmesan
1 T. butter

Heat the olive oil in a medium, heavy-bottomed pot on medium-high heat. Add the leeks and sauté for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the asparagus and sauté for 4 minutes, then add the salt, pepper, and wine or wine vinegar. Turn the heat to high, add the rice and additional olive oil, and stir well. Allow the grains of rice to become coated with the oil and thoroughly incorporated into the vegetable mixture. Add the cream and 1/2 cup of the hot stock to the pot, turn the heat to medium, and stir well. You will add the remaining stock, 1/2 cup at a time, until the risotto is perfectly happy and ready to serve. The grains of rice want to gradually absorb the liquid, slowly releasing their velvety starches into the mix. You will want to stir most of the time so that you can feel the moment that more liquid wants to be added. Add another 1/2 cup stock when the liquid has been mostly absorbed; there will be a moist gravy-like consistency to the mixture and you will hear a sound that is neither dry (sizzling) nor wet (slurpy), but moist ... asking for the addition of more liquid to absorb.

You will add a total of 5–6 cups stock over a period of 25–35 minutes. After you've added the liquid and stirred it well, you can stop stirring for a few moments and work on a different aspect of the meal, but do keep your attention keenly on the risotto. The risotto is done when the grains are tender, moist, and starchy on the outside and the very inside of each grain of rice has a little firmness to your tooth (*al dente*). The whole mixture should have a softness and starchy creaminess. Turn off the heat, add the parmesan and butter, stir well, and serve immediately.

Serve this risotto with salad, a green vegetable, candlelight, and Italian opera music. Linger for a long evening, enjoying loved ones, enjoying life, and appreciating great, simple food. You've now captured the essence of this wonderful dish!