

THE LITTLE RISOTTO BOOK



This brochure has been produced as part of a promotion for Risotto and Italian rice by the Italian Trade Commission in conjunction with Regione Lombardia and Ente Nazionale Risi

The aim of the project is to promote awareness and increase the popularity of risotto, a traditional dish from the Lombardy region, and the qualities of Italian rice, an essential ingredient in its preparation.



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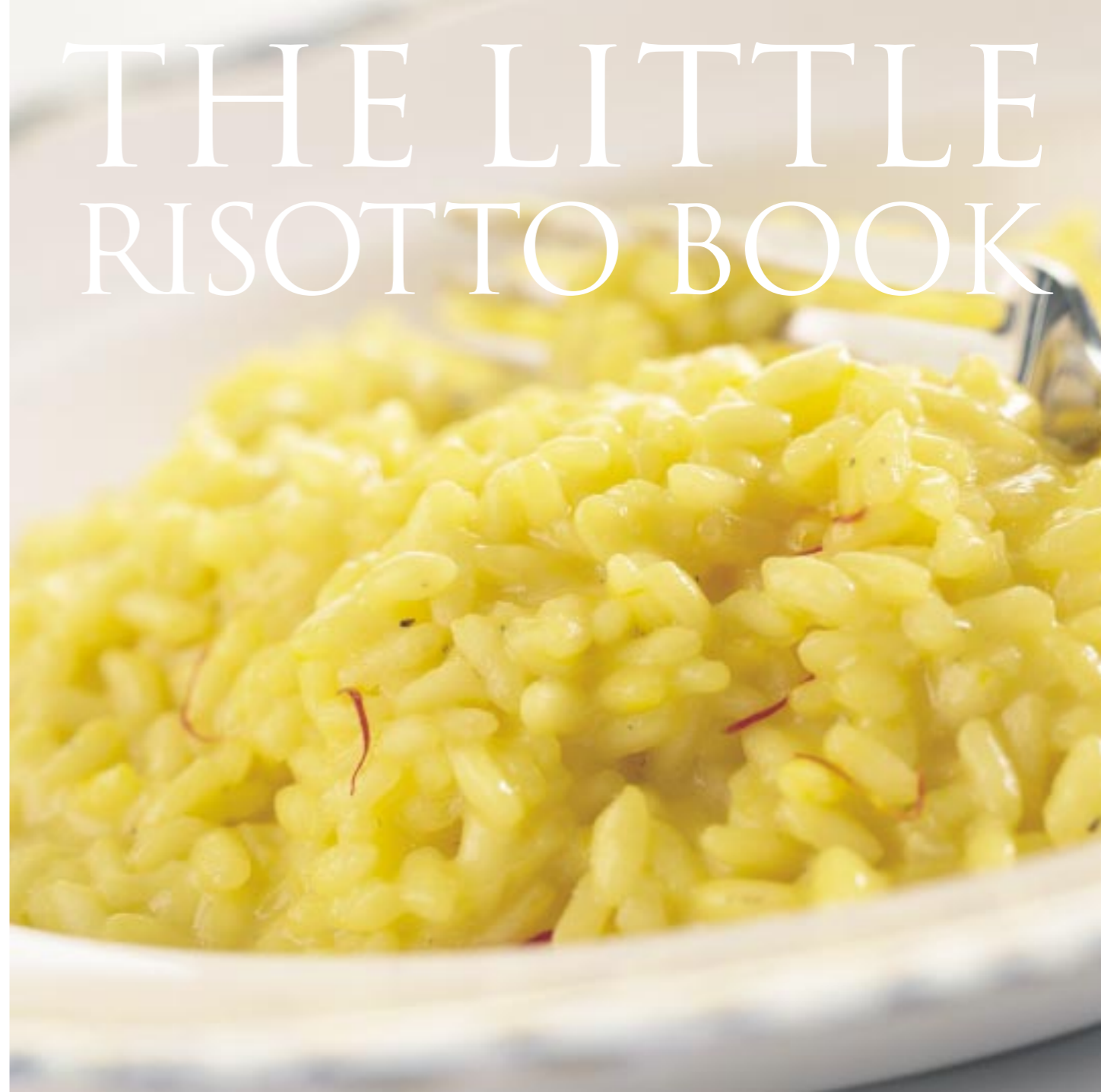
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WHAT IS RICE?

EACH LITTLE PLANT contains 100 to 200 grains of rice. It is a cereal, and like all cereals is made up of starch, which is essentially a carbohydrate. This makes it very nourishing, as it is packed with proteins, vitamins, minerals and fibre, as well as being easily digested. However, unlike other cereals, rice contains no gluten, making it ideal for celiacs and sufferers of wheat intolerance.

ALONG WITH OTHER GRAINS, rice appeared on our planet approximately ten thousand years ago, when the great glaciers melted away to leave huge marshy areas in those parts of the world which are now India, Thailand and China. It could be said that since then, rice has been the staple food for three-quarters of the world's population.



From China to Japan, passing through India and Indonesia, rice is more than just food – it is part of the culture and civilisation of these countries. Amongst other things, rice is considered to be a gift from the gods, a symbol of fertility and life. This symbolism is also present amongst Mediterranean cultures, where rice is thrown over newlyweds to wish them well.

It was probably Alexander the Great, after the conquest of India in 350 B.C. who brought rice to the western world. The widespread use of rice throughout the Mediterranean basin is considered to be due to the Arab culture, however some archaeological evidence has been found which dates the use of rice as even earlier, in 630 B.C. It would appear that rice was one of the goods which was traded in the spice markets of Alexandria, although it was considerably less valuable than pepper.

As far as Italy is concerned, there are several possibilities. Some say it came from the Arabs who ruled Sicily for so long, while others believe it was the Venetian merchants, who had many dealings with their Eastern counterparts. Perhaps rice was brought home by crusaders, after having fought against Islam in the Holy Wars, or maybe it was the Benedictine monks who established sea harbour health care centres.

Whichever route it came by, a book of household accounts of the Dukes of Savoia in Piedmont, Northern Italy in 1300, records an expense of 13 imperials for the buying of rice for making desserts. In the 15th Century rice is mentioned in a letter written by the Duke of Milan and by the 16th Century the entire great city of Milan was surrounded by rice fields, the sunlight glinting off their network of canals.

TRADITION & CULTURE



IN THE CENTURIES which followed, rice growing in Northern Italy expanded all over Lombardy, Piedmont and the Veneto, with vast expanses of rice fields, criss – crossed by an efficient irrigation system of canals and tiny locks. As a result, Italy is the largest producer of rice in Europe, with nearly a ton and half of rice produced every year, from the cultivation of

two hundred and fifty thousand hectares. Ninety five percent of rice is grown in the three regions already mentioned, but a small amount is also grown in the wetter areas of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Sardinia and Calabria.

In the Philippines, over ten thousand different kinds of rice have been recorded, of which five thousand are cultivated. This is in sharp contrast to Italy, where there are fifty different cultivated varieties of rice. Of these, Arborio, Carnaroli and Vialone Nano are the most widely available and all three are suitable for making the great rice dish of Italy: risotto.

Arborio has a big fat grain and is ideal for all risotto. Being very rich in starch it makes for a very creamy finish.

Carnaroli is considered one of the best of Italian rice varieties, and is well known for holding its texture and not overcooking. It

is used for very special risotto and is good enough to be partnered with the most luxurious ingredients.

Vialone Nano has a small, fat, very hard grain. Traditionally, it has been the rice preferred by the Venetians and by the people of Mantova. It gives excellent results, but is quite different to the other two.



CULTIVATION OF RICE IN ITALY



EATING RICE means healthy eating. "He who offers rice, offers life itself", says Bhudda, acknowledging the nutritional properties of rice, as did many in other ancient cultures.

Hippocrates would urge the ancient Olympians to nourish themselves both before and after competing, with a mixture of various cooked grains called *ēptasaneī*, enriched with a blend of water and honey. This is not a million miles away from what modern day athletes choose to eat when they prepare for competitions.

It is a scientific fact that rice, and other carbohydrates can correct the lack of essential vitamins and minerals caused by eating too many processed foods, that are everywhere in our modern-day diet. Rice contains plenty of vitamins of the B group, as well as vitamin E and vitamin PP, and as far as its mineral content rice contains calcium, copper, iron, manganese, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, selenium and zinc. As if this wasn't enough, rice also contains 4.1 grams of protein per 100 grams of uncooked rice.



RICE IS A FUNDAMENTAL ingredient in Italian cooking, especially in Northern Italy, particularly when it comes to risotto. Risotto is now rightfully held in enormous regard all over the world as one of the truly great Italian dishes. Italian restaurants everywhere have risotto on the menu, and, as any chef will tell you, you need to use authentic Italian risotto rice such as Arborio, Carnaroli and Vialone Nano to make authentic Italian risotto. Their special balance of carbohydrate and proteins will

always give you the best texture and flavour. Luckily, these varieties are all available in the UK.

So, the next pages are dedicated to specially created recipes that show how simple it is to make a perfect risotto, using genuine Italian rice. There is also a clear explanation of the technique required for making risotto, with lots of specially commissioned photographs. The recipes are clearly marked, from the simplest to the slightly more ambitious. By preparing risotto for your family and guests, you'll be giving them Italian tradition and a healthy and delicious meal.

RICE IN ITALIAN CUISINE

RICE & HEALTH



one



two



three



four

THIS IS A RECIPE for a plain risotto. For any other kind of risotto such as mushroom, seafood etc. please refer to our individual recipes. The recipe given below is to show the basic technique used in cooking any kind of risotto.

BASIC RECIPE FOR RISOTTO

1. Fry some very finely chopped onion with butter slowly and carefully so as not to colour the onion.
2. When the onion is soft, add all the rice in one go and stir to heat the rice through for about 5 minutes, taking care not to brown either the rice or the onion.
3. When the rice is crackling hot, add a glass of dry white wine and stir for one minute to evaporate, then immediately begin to gradually add the hot stock. Each time add only enough stock to cover the risotto as it cooks, then stir gently until it has been absorbed and add only then add the next quantity. Continue in this way until the rice is cooked through which will be after 20 minutes.
4. When the rice is cooked but not mushy, the risotto is ready. Add the final quantity of butter and a handful of freshly grated grana padano, stir and cover. Leave to stand for 2 or 3 minutes before serving.





MAKING RISOTTO AHEAD OF TIME

HERE'S A HANDY

tip for people who would rather make their risotto ahead of time than spend twenty minutes or so in the kitchen, stirring. This method is used in many restaurants, where service is often fast and furious. Cook the risotto half way using the butter, finely chopped onion and a light vegetable or chicken stock as follows :

1. Fry the onion and butter.
2. Add the rice and toast the grains.
3. Add a glass of wine or a first ladle of stock. Begin the cooking procedure, stirring and gradually adding stock.
4. After 10 minutes, remove the risotto from the heat. It should now be half cooked. Tip it out on to a plastic tray or clean baking tin and spread it out to an inch depth. Cover loosely and leave in a cold part of your kitchen to cool completely.
5. When you wish to serve, resume cooking the risotto from this point. Return it to a clean saucepan and start gradually adding more very hot stock and all the other ingredients.

Instead of the full 20 minutes, this should now only take half the time, and the risotto will still have that unique quality of being al dente and deliciously creamy all at the same time.

RECIPES BY
VALENTINA HARRIS





RISOTTO AI QUATTRO FORMAGGI

RISOTTO WITH FOUR CHEESES Serves 4 Skill level: 1

This plain and simple risotto makes a very good base for all kinds of other additions.

Master this one and you can make any kind of risotto!

You can vary the flavour by changing the type of cheese you decide to use.

INGREDIENTS

75g (3oz) unsalted butter	5 tablespoons freshly grated Grana Padano cheese
1 small to medium sized onion, peeled and finely chopped	40g (1½ oz) Fontina cheese, cubed finely
350g (12oz) preferably Vialone Nano rice	40g (1½ oz) Emmenthal cheese, cubed finely
1.2 litres (2 pints) approximately best quality chicken or meat stock, or very flavoursome vegetable stock (Brodo), kept hot	25g (1oz) Gorgonzola or Dolcelatte
	Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

Fry the onion in half the butter for about 10 minutes over a very low heat, or until the onion is soft but not coloured.

Stir in the rice and toast the grains thoroughly on all sides, so that they are opaque but not coloured.

Add the first ladleful of hot stock and stir it in.

Then continue as normal, adding the stock, letting the rice absorb the liquid and all its flavour, stirring constantly.

When the rice is almost completely soft and creamy, stir in all the cheese and the rest of the butter.

Taste and adjust seasoning, then cover and rest for about 3 minutes before transferring on to a platter to serve.



RISOTTO ALLO ZAFFERANO

SAFFRON RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level: 1

This is really a different version of a Risotto alla Milanese, but unlike the classic recipe it contains no bone marrow and it does contain a glass of wine. Add more saffron if you want a brighter yellow colour and a more intense flavour. If Saffron powder in sachets is difficult to find, put a pinch of saffron threads into a cupful of warm water or stock and leave to infuse for about 10 minutes.

You can then use the liquid with the threads, or strain the liquid off for use and discard the threads.

INGREDIENTS

1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
75g (3oz) unsalted butter
350g (12oz) preferably Arborio rice
1 glass dry white wine

1.2 litres (2 pints) chicken or beef stock
(I prefer to make this one with chicken), kept simmering
1 to 3 sachets of Saffron powder
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
55g (2oz) freshly grated Grana Padano cheese

METHOD

Fry the onion very gently in half the butter until soft and shiny.

Pour in the rice and stir it around until the grains are opaque and very hot, without browning.

Pour over the wine and stir until the liquid has been absorbed and the fumes evaporated.

Add the first ladleful of stock, stir and wait for it to be absorbed, then add more stock and repeat.

Continue in this way, always waiting for the rice to swell with the stock it has absorbed before adding more.

You should keep a constant ripple going in the pot, never too wet and never dried out for more than a few seconds.

About half way through, stir the saffron in the rice.

When the risotto is velvety and creamy, but with each grain still firm to the bite in the middle, take it off the heat and stir in the rest of the butter and the Grana Padano.

Adjust the seasoning and cover.

Leave to rest for about 3 minutes, then transfer on to a warmed serving platter and serve at once.



RISOTTO D'ASPARAGI

ASPARAGUS RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level 2

The lovely fresh, luxurious flavour of the asparagus runs right through this risotto, as the cooking liquid from the asparagus is used to cook the rice, as well as the vegetables themselves.

INGREDIENTS

400g (14oz) fresh asparagus	1.2 litres (2 pints) chicken or vegetable stock, kept just below boiling point
50g (2oz) unsalted butter	50g (2oz) Grana Padano cheese, freshly grated
2 medium shallots, peeled and chopped	1 tablespoons freshly chopped parsley
350g (12oz) preferably Carnaroli rice	Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

Boil or steam the asparagus with a large pinch of sea salt for about 6 minutes or until just tender.

Drain, reserving the cooking liquid, and leave to cool.

Melt half the butter and fry the chopped shallots for about 5 minutes until soft and transparent.

Cut the asparagus stalks into small pieces, leaving the spears intact.

Discard any hard sections of stalk and put the spears to one side.

Add the chopped tender stalks to the saucepan with the shallots.

Fry together for a further 3 minutes, stirring, then add the rice all in one go and stir it around until it is heated through and shining.

Then add the first ladleful of asparagus cooking liquid.

Stir until the liquid has been absorbed, then add more.

Always add small amounts and always wait for the rice to absorb the liquid before you add any more.

When you run out of the asparagus cooking liquid, begin to add the stock.

Continue in this way for about 20 minutes until the rice is swollen but still firm in the middle.

Stir in the reserved asparagus spears, the Grana Padano and parsley.

Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Remove from the heat, cover and leave to stand for about 3 minutes.

Transfer to a warmed serving platter and serve at once.



RISOTTO AL GORGONZOLA

GORGONZOLA RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level 2

The very strong taste of good, ripe Gorgonzola is unmistakable and absolutely delicious. If you find it a little too strong, try using half the quantity. Follow this risotto with a mouth cleansing salad.

INGREDIENTS

1 onion, peeled and chopped	100 g (4oz) ripe Gorgonzola – either Piccante or Dolce
½ teaspoon dried sage leaves, very finely chopped	sea salt and freshly milled black pepper
100g (4oz) unsalted butter	2 tablespoons single cream
400g (14oz) preferably Arborio rice	4 fresh sage leaves, washed and chopped very finely
1 glass dry white wine	freshly grated Parmesan offered separately
1.2 litres (2 pints) chicken or vegetable stock, simmering	

METHOD

Fry the onion and the sage together in half the butter until the onion is soft and melting.

Add all the rice and raise the heat slightly to toast the grains add onion, sage and butter and stir.

Don't let any of these ingredients brown but make sure you get the rice really hot before adding the wine and the first ladleful of stock.

Continue to add the hot stock, stirring constantly and allowing the liquid to be absorbed before adding more.

About half way through, stir the Gorgonzola into the risotto.

It will melt quickly and soon become distributed through the rice if you keep stirring.

Continue to cook the rice, making sure that the grains always absorb the stock before you add more liquid.

When the risotto is creamy and velvety, but the rice grains are still firm to the bite, take it off the heat and stir in the rest of the butter, the cream and the fresh sage.

Adjust seasoning, bearing in mind that Gorgonzola is very salty so you probably won't need to add more salt, though you will probably like a little pepper.



RISOTTO AL SALMONE

SALMON RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level 2

The better the fish you use the more tasty the dish will be. It is important that both the fresh and the smoked salmon don't lose their flavour in the ocean of rice, you should end up with a sweet, rich fishy flavour.

INGREDIENTS

400g (14oz) Salmon tail fillet or equivalent Salmon steaks

1 bay leaf, sea salt

5 black peppercorns

peel of ½ a lemon

a handful of parsley

75g (3oz) unsalted butter

1 medium sized shallot, peeled and chopped

400g (14oz) preferably Vialone Nano rice

1 glass dry white wine

to serve: 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

1 finely grated zest of one very small lemon

4 slices of smoked salmon, cut into fine strips

METHOD

Wash and check the fish, removing any visible bones.

Put the bay leaf, salt, peppercorns, lemon peel and parsley into a saucepan large enough to take the fish and cover with water.

Simmer gently for about 20 minutes, then lower the salmon into the water. Poach for about 10 minutes, then cover and take off the heat.

Leave the salmon to stand until cooked in the hot flavoured water.

Remove the fish, skin and fillet carefully, then cut into small pieces.

Strain and reserve the stock. Keep the stock simmering.

Fry half the butter and the oil with the shallot until just softened, in a deep, heavy bottomed pan.

Add the rice and toast the grains thoroughly, then add the wine.

Cook for 2 or 3 minutes to allow the alcohol to burn off, then begin to add the hot salmon stock, stirring constantly and always allowing the liquid to be absorbed before adding more.

Five minutes before the rice is cooked, stir in the cooked fish fillets, breaking some up as you stir them through.

When the rice is tender, take the saucepan off the heat and stir in the butter.

Cover with a lid and allow to rest for 2 minutes, then transfer to a platter. Sprinkle with the chopped parsley, lemon zest and the tiny strips of smoked salmon to serve.



RISOTTO ALLA PRIMAVERA

SPRING VEGETABLE RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level 2

This risotto depends upon the quality of the vegetables used in order to deliver the delicious, fresh, light taste which is so typical of this dish. Make sure you use tender, sweet vegetables that are packed with flavour. All the vegetables need to be chopped to about the same size as the peas.

INGREDIENTS

1 or 2 plump spring onion, peeled, washed and finely chopped
a small handful of fine green beans, topped and tailed
2 or 3 baby carrots, scraped and chopped coarsely
2 or 3 young, tender courgettes, with their flowers if possible,
chopped coarsely
3 to 4 tablespoons fresh peas, podded

2 very small florets fresh sprouting broccoli, chopped coarsely
50g (2oz) unsalted butter, 350g (12 oz) preferably Carnaroli rice
1.2 litres (2 pints) vegetable or light chicken stock, kept
simmering
sea salt and freshly milled pepper
3 heaped tablespoons freshly grated Grana Padano cheese

METHOD

Sauté the vegetables together very gently and carefully for about 8 to 10 minutes with $\frac{2}{3}$ of the butter.

Add the rice and stir to coat with the butter and vegetables.

Season, then begin to add the hot stock, stirring constantly to prevent sticking.

Never add more than one large ladle full of liquid at a time and always wait for the rice to absorb it before adding any more.
(You may not need all the liquid, depending on the quality of the rice.)

The rice will take 20 minutes to cook from the time you begin adding the liquid.

Remove from the heat.

Adjust the seasoning, stir in the remaining butter and the freshly grated Grana Padano.

Cover and rest for 2 minutes, then stir again and transfer on to a warmed platter to serve immediately.



RISOTTO ALLA ZUCCA

PUMPKIN RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level: 2

The delicious colour and flavour of this wonderful risotto makes it a great favourite. If you can find them, use tiny scooped out pumpkins and serve the risotto inside them. The addition of a squeeze of lemon juice or vinegar helps to balance the sweetness.

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 75g (3oz) thickly cut Pancetta or top quality smoked streaky bacon, cubed | 1.2 litres (2 pints) approximately vegetable or chicken stock, kept at a simmer |
| 1 medium sized onion, chopped | a handful of finely chopped fresh parsley |
| 500g (1lb 2 oz) ripe orange pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled, seeded and chopped | 1 teaspoon lemon juice or white wine vinegar |
| sea salt and freshly milled black pepper | 2 tablespoons unsalted butter |
| 400g (14oz) preferably Carnaroli rice | 3 heaped tablespoons freshly grated Grana Padano cheese |

METHOD

Fry the Pancetta gently in a heavy bottomed large pot until the fat runs, then add the onion and fry until softened.

Add the pumpkin and cook gently with the onion and Pancetta until softened and mushy.

Add the rice and toast it carefully on all sides, then begin to add stock, stir and allow the rice to absorb the liquid, add more stock, season to taste, and when the rice has absorbed the liquid, add more.

Continue in this way until the rice is tender and all the grains are plump and cooked through.

Stir in the parsley, lemon juice or vinegar, butter and Grana Padano, remove from the heat and cover.

Leave to stand for three minutes, then stir again and transfer to a warmed platter. Serve at once.



RISOTTO CON I FUNGHI

MUSHROOM RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level: 2

There are many versions of this favourite, so many people seem to love Mushroom Risotto above all other! Here is my own version, which uses a touch of garlic and rosemary to really bring out the flavour of the mushrooms. If you cannot find wild mushrooms, use ordinary cultivated mushrooms instead. For a really strong mushrooms flavour you can of course use dried porcini mushrooms

INGREDIENTS

200g (7oz) mixed wild mushrooms, cleaned and chopped coarsely
1 onion, peeled and chopped
1 or 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
1 small sprig fresh rosemary, chopped
75g (3oz) unsalted butter

1 large glass dry white wine
350g (12 oz) preferably Arborio rice
1.2 litres (2 pints) chicken or vegetable stock, kept just below boiling point
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
freshly grated Grana Padanocheese – served separately, *(optional)*

METHOD

Pick the mushrooms carefully, making sure they are clean and free of any forest debris, wipe them clean where necessary and trim off any hard corners before chopping coarsely.

Put the onion, garlic and rosemary into a large, heavy bottomed saucepan with half the butter.

Fry gently together until the onion is soft.

Add the cleaned, chopped mushrooms and stir together thoroughly.

Cook the mushrooms until just soft. Add the white wine and stir.

Wait for the alcohol fumes to evaporate, then add the rice and seasoning and begin the cooking process, adding a little hot stock at a time and waiting for the rice to absorb it, stirring thoroughly each time you add more liquid.

Continue in this way until the rice is tender and all the grains are plump and fluffy.

Remove from the heat, stir in the rest of the butter and cover.

Leave to stand for about 3 minutes before transferring to a warmed platter and serving.

You may offer Grana Padano cheese separately, but if the mushrooms are very strong, the cheese may be unnecessary.



RISOTTO CON POMODORI E BASILICO

TOMATO AND BASIL RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level: 2

If the tomato skins are very tough, it would be a good idea to peel the tomatoes first. To do this easily, nick the skins carefully, (you only need a very small nick) plunge them into boiling water for one minute, then drain, dry and take the skins off with a sharp knife. This is a very fresh tasting risotto for the hot summer months.

INGREDIENTS

a handful of fresh basil leaves	1 large glass dry white wine
2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped	sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 ripe, squashy tomatoes, coarsely chopped	1.2 litres (2 pints) vegetable stock, kept just below boiling point
100mls (4floz) Light Extra Virgin olive oil	50g (2oz) freshly grated Pecorino or Grana Padano cheese
150g (5oz) pine kernels	and 75g (3 oz) very fresh mozzarella, chopped finely
350g (12oz) preferably Arborio rice	

METHOD

Put the basil, garlic and tomatoes in a saucepan with half the oil and fry gently together for about 15 minutes to form a thick, chunky sauce.

Season with salt and pepper and take it off the heat. Leave to one side until required.

Meanwhile, pour the rest of the oil into a second saucepan and add the pine kernels.

Toast the pine kernels until golden but not dark brown.

Add the rice and toast the rice in the same way.

Then add the wine and stir until the alcohol fumes have evaporated.

Now begin to add stock gradually and stir the rice as it absorbs the liquid.

Remember to do this at the pace of the rice, in other words, keep stirring gently and never add more stock than the rice can take at one time.

About half way through this process (approximately 10 minutes) add the tomato, basil and garlic sauce.

Stir and resume the cooking process with the hot stock as before.

When the grains are still firm in the middle, but the risotto is creamy and velvety, take it off the heat and stir in both the cheeses.

Cover and leave to rest for 2 minutes, then transfer on to a warmed platter and serve at once.



RISOTTO ALLO SPUMANTE

SPARKLING WHITE WINE RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level: 3

One of the simplest, most traditional of all the risotti, which is actually more difficult to get absolutely right than you might first think! The skill is in not losing the flavour of the Spumante completely, and to retain a little of the fizz. It goes without saying that whatever wine is used to make the risotto should also be the wine that is drunk with it.

INGREDIENTS

1 onion, peeled and finely chopped

¼ stick celery, chopped very finely

75g (3oz) unsalted butter

400g (14 oz) preferably Arborio rice

½ to 1 bottle Dry Spumante

1.2 litres (2 pints) chicken or vegetable stock

sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

50g (2oz) freshly grated Grana Padano cheese

METHOD

Fry the onion and celery very gently in half the butter until soft and translucent.

Add all the rice and toast the grains, turning them in the butter and onion until very hot but not browned.

Stir in a large glass full of Spumante and stir until the alcohol has evaporated, then add more wine and repeat.

When all the wine, except for one final glass, has been used up and the fumes from the alcohol have been boiled off, begin to add the hot stock.

Stir constantly and allow all the liquid to be absorbed before adding more.

Continue to cook the rice in this way, stirring and making sure that the rice always absorbs the stock before you add more liquid.

When the risotto is creamy and velvety, but the rice grains are still firm to the bite take it off the heat and stir in the remaining butter, the cheese and the final glass of Spumante.

Adjust seasoning and cover.

Leave to rest for about 2 minutes, then stir gently once more and transfer on to a warmed platter.



RISOTTO CON LE COZZE

MUSSEL RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level: 4

For this very gutsy, bright and colourful risotto you will need some lovely ripe, squashy tomatoes which might need to be skinned. A very flavour packed risotto this one, perfect for the summer and a must for all seafood lovers.

INGREDIENTS

1.2 kg (2lbs) fresh, live mussels, scrubbed and cleaned thoroughly
6 tablespoons Extra Virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
600g (1lb 4oz) ripe, squashy tomatoes, washed and coarsely chopped

350g (12oz) preferably Arborio rice
1.2 litres (2 pints) fish stock, kept simmering
a handful of fresh, flat leaf parsley, chopped finely
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
25g (1oz) unsalted butter

METHOD

Put all the clean mussels into a wide, shallow pan. Put a lid on the pan and put the pan over a medium to high heat.

Shake the pan over the heat, encouraging all the mussels to open up.

After about 8 minutes, all those that are going to open will have opened. Take out the mussels as they open.

Remove the mussels from the shells and discard all but the prettiest shells, which you can save for decoration.

Strain the liquid from the mussels through a very fine sieve and set aside. Discard all unopened shells and empty shells you don't want.

Under no circumstances force open a mussel that has not opened after cooking.

Next, fry the garlic and oil together until the garlic is blond, then add all the rice.

Mix together thoroughly until the rice is crackling hot and well coated in oil and garlic. Now add the liquid from the mussels and the tomatoes.

Mix together until the rice has absorbed the liquid, then begin to add the hot fish stock gradually.

Stir constantly and only add more stock when the previous amount has been absorbed by the rice.

Continue in this way until the rice is three quarters cooked, then add the cooked mussels and the parsley.

Season with salt and pepper and resume adding stock, stirring and adding more stock once the rice has soaked up the previous stock.

When the rice is creamy and velvety, but the grains are still firm in the centre, take the risotto off the heat and stir in the butter.

Cover and leave to rest for 2 minutes, then transfer to a warmed platter, decorate with the saved shells and serve at once.



RISOTTO DI GAMBERETTI

PRAWN RISOTTO Serves 4 Skill level: 4

*Make sure the prawns are really fresh for a delicious, sweet flavour.
Any kind of prawns is suitable.*

INGREDIENTS

50g (2oz) unsalted butter	½ glass brandy
1 carrot, finely chopped	3 tablespoons Extra Virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, peeled and chopped	350g (12 oz) preferably Carnaroli rice
6 fresh parsley stalks, chopped	2 glasses of dry white wine
½ bay leaf	1.2 litres (2 pints) fish stock
500g (1lb 2oz) fresh raw prawns (shell on)	For the prawn butter: 125g (5 oz) unsalted butter

METHOD

Fry together half the butter, the carrot, half the onion, the parsley and the halved bay leaf.

When the vegetables are all soft, add the prawns and cook them quickly, basting with the brandy, until they are cooked.

Take them off the heat and remove the heads from all the prawns. Peel the tails and put them to one side.

Next, make the prawn butter.

Take all the shells, heads and vegetables left over from cooking the prawns. Put them all in the food processor and whizz until completely smooth.

Melt the 125g (4 oz) of butter in a saucepan very slowly.

Add the puree of prawn and mix together thoroughly until you have a thick sauce.

Strain this carefully, diluting with a little stock if necessary, and set aside.

Fry the rest of the onion in the remaining butter until soft and transparent.

Add the rice and stir until shiny, then pour in the wine.

Evaporate the wine, and begin to add stock to the rice, stirring and adding stock gradually once the rice has absorbed the previous stock.

Continue in this way until the rice is cooked, velvety and creamy, but still firm. Adjust seasoning.

Take off the heat, stir in the reserved prawn butter and the prawns, mix together and cover.

Rest for two minutes, then stir once more and transfer on to a warmed platter to serve at once.