

RISOTTO PRIMAVERA

Serves 6 to 8 as a side dish

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a recipe learned at a presentation by three professional chefs.

Risottos (risotti?) require constant attention. You stay at the stove stirring the rice and adding stock for about 20 minutes until it is ready to serve. The constant stirring and the Arborio rice give risottos their creamy texture. This recipe was given to me by a professional chef. He created it for the vegans he serves.



Vegetable Stock:

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large onion; coarsely chopped

5 leafy celery stalks; cleaned and coarsely chopped

3 garlic cloves; coarsely chopped or crushed

3 large carrots; coarsely chopped

2 bay leaves

20 springs fresh parsley

About 10 peppercorns

Any additional vegetables, such as parsnip, rutabaga, etc., as desired, but nothing acidic (no tomatoes)

Ingredients:

¼ cup (40g) peas, fresh or frozen

¼ cup (40g) carrots; diced about the same size as the peas

¼ cup (40g) onion; diced

¼ cup (40g) squash; diced (butternut, banana, etc.—I can even see the possibility of using pumpkin)

¼ cup (40g) celery; diced

3 cups (about 700ml) vegetable stock, either homemade or store-bought (see below)

1 cup (200g) Arborio Rice

2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt to taste

Optional: about 15 saffron threads

Directions:

For the risotto, dice one carrot, a stalk of celery, about ¼ cup of squash, and ¼ cup of onion. Also set aside about ¼ cup of peas, either fresh or frozen.

You can make your own vegetable stock from vegetable trim saved in the freezer. You need enough to make at least 3 cups of stock. Or you can buy some fresh vegetables, as I do. I use carrots, celery, onion, parsnip, rutabaga, some squash, and sometimes a leek (which has a strong flavor). Include anything else you might think would add good flavor to a stock. Chop the vegetables coarsely and place in a stock pot. Add enough water to cover. Add herbs such as 2 bay leaves, garlic, oregano, basil, whole peppercorns, anything you might have in the cupboard. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer 30 minutes. Allow to cool; then strain. You can wrap the cooked vegetables in a piece of clean cotton muslin and squeeze out more juice. This will make 7 to 10 cups of stock. The remaining stock can be frozen and saved for soups, such as Pasta Fagioli.

Bring 3 cups of stock to a simmer in a small saucepan. Keep the temperature low beneath the stock.

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan. Add the rice and stir. Add a ladle or two of stock and stir. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and continue stirring until most of the liquid is absorbed. Add another ladle of stock and stir the rice again until the liquid is nearly all absorbed. This first process should continue for about 10 minutes.

Add the diced vegetables and more stock. Continue cooking as above. Continue adding stock until it is all incorporated. The overall cooking time should be around 20 minutes. The finished rice should be *al dente* and the vegetables should be tender. Serve immediately.

STEP-BY-STEP



I usually make my own stock from vegetables bought at the store. The ones I buy vary. Here I have carrots, celery, onion, a parsnip, a rutabaga, banana squash, and a leek. The banana squash—or at least a small part of it—is used in the risotto. The remaining squash will be roasted and stored for later.

As for the leek, I sometimes exclude it because I find that leeks have a strong flavor that can overpower a stock. The leek is fine in a recipe with a rich, robust flavor, such as my Pasta Fagioli, but I think it is too strong for the delicate flavor of a risotto.

2



I dice the risotto vegetables first and set them aside. Everything else can go into the stock pot, but use only part of the squash.

3



For the stock you can coarsely chop the vegetables. Place in a large pot and add enough water to cover. Simmer for about 30 minutes. Drain and strain. You can get extra juice out of the cooked vegetables by squeezing them in a piece of cotton muslin. I keep muslin in my kitchen just for this purpose.

4



Before you start the rice, heat 3 cups of stock in a small saucepan. Bring just to a boil and then reduce the heat to low. Keep it barely simmering. By adding hot stock to the rice as you prepare the risotto you don't stop the cooking process with cold liquid.

In the first step, heat a couple tablespoons of olive oil in a larger saucepan and add the rice. Stir. Add a ladle of stock to the rice and cook, stirring constantly, until most of the liquid is absorbed. Add another ladle of stock and slowly cook again until most of the liquid is absorbed. Keep stirring. This first step should take about 10 minutes.

5



Now add the diced vegetables and more stock. Cook as above. Continue adding stock, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time, and cook until you've used all the stock.

6



The cooked rice should be tender and creamy. Mine has a yellow hue because I added some saffron threads, which is optional. Adjust for salt and serve.

7



Place in a serving bowl and serve warm. If you do not require a vegan dish, you can stir in some grated Parmesan or Romano cheese after the pan is removed from the heat, which is customary with risotto.

Conclusion

Although risottos are somewhat labor intensive, what with all that stirring at the stove, I think they are worth the effort. I like rice anyway. A risotto with a creamy texture and delicate flavor is delicious.