

Laurel's Squash Risotto

Courtesy of Laurel Ritmiller Lucrezia and In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens

Ingredients:

1 medium delicata squash
4 cups chicken stock
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) sweet butter plus another 1/4 cup later if desired
2/3 cup chopped onion
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1-1/4 cups Arborio rice or long-grain rice
1 cup white wine
1/2 red bell pepper, diced
1/2 cup finely diced carrots (optional)
4 teaspoons chopped parsley
several sage leaves, finely chopped
1 small fresh tomato, diced
grated parmesan cheese to taste (start with 1/2 cup)
1 6-1/2 ounce roll of Chèvre cheese (optional but what a great idea)

Instructions:

Peel the squash. Cut off the ends and scoop out the seeds and the goop in the middle.

Cut 3/4 of the squash into small cubes. Cut the remaining quarter into tiny julienne strips and set them aside.

Pour the chicken stock into a saucepan and pop in the cubes of squash. Cover and cook until the squash softens, about 20 minutes. Let the squash and liquid cool for a couple of minutes and then puree them. Put the squash stock into the saucepan and keep it on low heat as you make the risotto.

In a heavy saucepan over moderate heat melt 1/4 cup butter and add the onion and garlic. Cook, stirring, for 5 minutes. Add the rice. Cook for 1 minute.

Add 3/4 cup of the wine plus the bell pepper and carrots (if you're using them), and stir. Add 1 cup of squash stock and keep stirring.

As the mixture cooks and the rice dries up, add the remaining squash stock a bit at a time. Cooking will take quite a while--somewhere between half an hour and 45 minutes. (In my experience, the only sure-fire way to know whether risotto is done is to taste it and decide whether the rice cooked.) If you run out of squash stock, add a small amount of water.

About 20 minutes into cooking your risotto, add the small pieces of squash.

Just before serving, add the tomatoes, the herbs, the remaining wine, the last bit of butter (if you want an extra rich risotto), and the parmesan.

For extra deliciousness, top each serving with a wedge of Chèvre. I didn't have any in the house so I omitted this, but I'm trying it next time! Serves 6.