

5 Simple, Yet Gourmet Risottos

It's easier than you think!

How to Make Great Risotto

When people ask me what my favorite thing to cook is, which happens quite often, I generally say risotto. There is something very soothing about stirring a warm pot of rice and nursing it to the perfect soft, creamy texture. Plus, an excuse to open a bottle of wine is never bad.

When we finally got to the subject of risotto in culinary school, I was slightly surprised to discover I have been making it correctly for many years, and so here is what I have to share on the topic. With the below risotto tutorial you should be able to make any risotto recipe turn out well, including the 5 original risotto recipes which follow.

The general method for making a great Risotto:

1. Get yourself two high sided saucepans. In the first put your stock and bring it to a simmer. You want to make sure you are adding *hot* stock. If it isn't hot it will cool down the starches in the rice and you won't get the creaminess desired in a risotto.
2. Chop up the aromatics finely, usually this consists of onion and sometimes garlic. You don't need very much. For a cup of rice, a few tablespoons of onions is plenty.
3. Sweat the aromatics in a few tablespoons of oil or butter in your second saucepan.
4. Add your rice to the aromatics. You want to toast the rice in the hot fat until it starts to make a popping sound, do stir it regularly to make sure it is cooking evenly.
5. Next add some wine. This will help soften the rice but also add a depth of flavour, cook at a gentle simmer until the wine has almost entirely disappeared.
6. Add stock slowly, you should add just enough to cover the rice, then allow it to gently simmer and absorb into the rice.
7. Stir regularly, but you don't need to stir it constantly. If you need to do a few dishes or focus on cooking something else you can let it go for short periods of time without stirring it.
8. Continue adding stock until the rice starts to soften when you bite into it, then you can reduce the amount of stock you are adding each time until it is just al dente.
9. Stir in any extra ingredients such as butter, cheese, cooked fish or fresh herbs. Serve immediately.

A few more tips:

Use **arborio or carnaroli rice**, other rices don't have enough starch to produce a true risotto. However, the risotto *method* can apply to any grain or even a starchy vegetable if chopped to the right size. Barley produces a nice "risotto".

When making a squash, mushroom, or any kind of risotto where the primary ingredient is cooked in the rice itself, **try and time it so that you add that ingredient at the appropriate time so that it is just cooked when the rice is cooked**. You don't want it too mushy or raw either. Generally I find that **it takes about 20 minutes** to cook a risotto but try it a few times to get the hang of it.

The correct consistency of the finished risotto is a matter of opinion. Some people like it quite soupy while others like it to be firm. Personally I like it to be quite saucy and soft, but as the cook it is easy to tweak it by how much moisture you leave in the risotto before you serve it, just remember it will thicken up a bit when you add the butter and transfer it to a plate.

You can use a variety of stocks, or flavoured liquids to create the base of your risotto. Chicken, beef, or vegetable stock are great choices. In fact I will generally choose a homemade vegetable stock over a box of store bought chicken stock. **Make sure that your stock is seasoned as it will season the risotto as it cooks.** That said because the liquid will reduce, do be careful you don't end up with a dish that is way too salty.

One of the big "aha" moments I had when discussing risotto in class was the validation that very rarely is risotto made in a restaurant this way. Generally it is par-cooked to 75%, cooled, and then finished cooking when a customer orders it. By doing it this way it won't ever be as creamy as when it is made start to finish at once. This explains why risotto is truly **something best made at home** or by your Nonna. I hope you enjoy this ebook, and if you do come and visit [Daily Unadventures in Cooking](#) for more recipes or send me [feedback](#) directly.

Caramelized Leek Risotto Recipe

The flavour of caramelized leeks is sweet, nutty and subtle. You can also easily change up this recipe by sweating rather than caramelizing the leeks or crisping up some chopped bacon instead of the butter and adding it back into the risotto as a garnish.

Caramelized Leek Risotto

(2-4 servings)

2 tablespoons butter

1 large leek

salt and pepper

3/4 cup arborio rice

3/4 cup white wine

~3-4 cups chicken or vegetable stock

1/2 cup grated Romano (Parmesan can be substituted)

1 tablespoon freshly minced chives

Trim off the dark green part of leek, you can reserve it for a future use. Cut remaining leek in half lengthwise then into 1/3" half moons. Clean thoroughly. In a heavy bottomed pot melt butter over medium heat, add leeks and stir to coat. Cook leeks stirring every five minutes or so until they start to brown. Let the leeks lightly brown evenly, you can turn it down a bit if you like as you don't want them to burn. It should take about 25 minutes. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and then add rice. Stir to coat and cook, stirring regularly for 2 minutes. Add wine and continue stirring until two thirds of the wine has evaporated. Start adding chicken stock in large ladelfuls, stirring often. You want the temperature of the mixture to be at a very light simmer. Continue adding stock until rice is tender and just a little bit al dente. Turn off heat and stir in cheese and chives. Taste and correct for seasoning.



Mushroom Risotto Recipe with Toasted Pistachios

Of mushroom risotto recipes there are an endless amount, but here is one of my favorites. This risotto is best made in the Fall when you have your pick of mushrooms and can choose a few fun kinds. It is also a great vessel for a little touch of truffle oil. And what a delectable vessel this mushroom risotto recipe is.

Mushroom Risotto with Toasted Pistachios

(serves 2)

3 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 pound mixed mushrooms (i.e. portabello, shiitake, brown)

1 shallot, minced

1 cup arborio or carnaroli rice

1/2 cup white wine

4 cups stock or broth

2 tablespoons raw pistachios

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

1/4 cup grated Parmaggiano Reggiano

1 tablespoon butter

salt and pepper

truffle oil (optional)

Wash and chop the mushrooms no bigger than what will comfortably fit on a spoon. Heat a large frying pan to medium and add a tablespoon of olive oil, fry half of the mushrooms until soft and browning. Remove to a plate and repeat with the other half.

Meanwhile put the stock in a small pot and warm to just below a simmer. In a heavy pot heat the last tablespoon of olive oil and sweat shallots until soft. Add rice and toast for 3 minutes. Add wine and turn heat to medium. Cook until wine has almost entirely evaporated, stirring regularly. Stir in mushrooms and enough stock to just cover the rice along with a big pinch of salt and freshly ground pepper. Cook risotto, adding stock as it becomes evaporated until it is just starting to lose it's bite. Slow down the stock letting the last become absorbed.

While your rice is cooking, put the pistachios into a frying pan over medium low heat and toast gently. They should just start to get fragrant. Roughly chop and set aside.

Once the risotto is soft enough that it just has a light bit, stir in butter, cheese and parsley. Taste and add salt and pepper as necessary. Serve each bowl topped with pistachios and truffle oil.



Radicchio Risotto Recipe with Walnuts and Gorgonzola

Sweet and salty recipes are everywhere but how do you feel about bitter recipes? This risotto highlights radicchio, a purple member of the bitter green family which is wonderful when cooked with other strong flavours. In the summer I like to pair gorgonzola, walnuts and radicchio together on the grill, but in the winter a comforting risotto surfaces these same flavours beautifully.

Radicchio Risotto with Walnuts and Gorgonzola

(serves 4)

*1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
3-4 cups chicken stock
1 small shallot, minced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 head radicchio, cored and shredded
salt and freshly ground pepper
1 cup arborio rice
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
1/2 cup white wine
2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon brown sugar
1/3 cup gorgonzola cheese
1/4 cup walnuts, toasted
2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped*

Heat a heavy saucepan to medium low heat. Put the chicken stock in a second sauce pan and bring to a simmer, once simmering turn down and keep hot. Add the olive oil and butter. Once the butter is melted, add the shallot and sweat until softened, about 2 minutes. Add the garlic, radicchio and a big pinch of salt. Turn the heat up to medium and stir regularly until wilted. Add the rice and thyme and stir for 3 minutes.

Add the wine, balsamic vinegar and brown sugar and stir until the liquid has almost all disappeared. Add enough stock to cover the rice and stir regularly as the stock absorbs. Continue adding stock and stirring, until the rice has softened up and only has the slightest test bite left to it. Stir in half of the gorgonzola, the parsley and the walnuts. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve topped with the remaining gorgonzola.



Roasted Tomato Risotto Recipe

This risotto is very richly flavoured with roasted tomatoes which concentrates the tomato flavour. Perfect in summer when the tomatoes are at their freshest, but it can be made all year long.

Roasted Tomato Risotto Recipe

(serves 2-4)

*1 1/2 cup tomatoes
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 cup arborio rice
1/2 cup white wine
~ 1 1/2 cups vegetable or chicken stock
1/4 cup shredded Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese
1 tablespoon butter
a squeeze lemon juice (optional)
salt and pepper
1 tablespoon minced fresh chives*

First you will need to roast the tomatoes. Halve all the tomatoes, season gently, toss with a tiny bit of olive oil if desired and place them in a low 300F oven for an hour or two. If you oven is low enough it requires very little attention. Once the tomatoes are finished you can start the risotto. (The tomatoes can be made ahead of time.)

Heat a heavy bottomed pot to medium low heat and sweat the onion and garlic in olive oil until fragrant and soft.

Meanwhile heat your stock to a simmer in a separate pot and keep hot. Add the rice and turn heat to medium. Allow the rice to cook by toasting in the bottom of the pan, stirring it regularly for 2 minutes. Add the wine and cook until the wine is absorbed, stirring constantly. Add a few ladles of stock until the rice is just covered. Continue cooking, stirring regularly, until the liquid absorbs into the rice, whenever the rice is no longer covered by stock add more.

When the risotto starts to get tender, about halfway through cooking add the roasted tomatoes and continue cooking. Taste the risotto regularly and when it starts to approach done, stop adding more liquid so it will reduce to the right consistency, it generally takes about 20 minutes to get to this step. Add the butter and cheese, and chives. Taste and adjust with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Serve immediately.



Asparagus, Pea, and Lemon Risotto Recipe

You can certainly not call risotto a light dish, but when you jazz it up with fresh spring vegetables, mint and lemon this is as fresh as it gets. This primavera risotto is lovely with grilled pork and a simple salad. Plus as far as risotto recipes go it is loaded with fresh vegetables.

Asparagus, Pea, and Lemon Risotto Recipe

(serves 2-4)

2 tablespoons butter, divided

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/4 cup finely minced shallot

1 clove minced garlic

1 cup arborio rice

1 cup white wine, room temperature if possible

~ 1L chicken or vegetable stock (give or take)

2/3 cup fresh shelled or frozen peas

2 cups fresh asparagus (1 average bunch size)

salt and pepper

1/4 grated Parmesan cheese

6 large fresh mint leaves, chiffonaded

1/2 lemon, juiced

In a heavy pot melt half the butter over medium heat and add olive oil and shallot. In a separate pot heat the stock to medium. Sweat shallot for about 2 minutes then add garlic for another minute. Add rice and cook, stirring regularly for 2 minutes. Add white wine and stir until the rice has absorbed then start adding stock a few ladlefuls at a time until absorbed. Continue stirring regularly.

This is a great time to prepare your vegetables and grate your cheese. To prepare the asparagus first wash it. Then break off ends and cut into 1/2 pieces.

When risotto is almost done (still a firm bite). Stir in asparagus for 3 minutes then add peas. Keep stirring and adding stock as necessary. Start tasting and adjusting your seasoning. When just al dente stir in mint, cheese, lemon juice, and remaining butter. Taste and correct again. Serve immediately.

