

Mushroom Risotto

Serves 6-8 Takes approx. 1hr15min

Ingredients

For the Risotto

1 – 1.5 litre boiling water
30-50ml Nomu Vegetable Stock, dissolved in the above water
Olive oil
Knob of Butter
1 large White Onion, finely diced
1 large stalk of Celery (or 5-6 little stalks), finely chopped
7 handfuls Arborio Rice
1 cup Dry White Wine (or Vermouth if you have)

For the Mushrooms

A few knobs of butter
Olive oil
4 cloves Garlic, minced
1 cup Dried Porcini Mushrooms, rehydrated in boiling water
4 large Brown Mushrooms
1 pack Portebellini Mushrooms
1 pack Woolworths' Exotic Mushroom mix
Lots of Fresh Thyme
Lots of Fresh Italian Flat-Leaf Parsley
1 Lemon, juice
Heaps of Parmesan, freshly grated
Salt & Pepper

Method

Contrary to most risotto recipes of cooking the rice first and allowing it to rest, I like to prepare and cook my vegetables first and set aside, then focus on the risotto. My reasoning really is because I don't like to let the hot risotto sit for too long as it continues to cook and can of course, then, overcook and become a mush.

So – first thing is to put the kettle on and once boiled, pour over the porcini's in a small bowl. Cover, and allow to soak for about 15 minutes until they are pliable. Now prepare all the mushrooms for the big fry up. Mince the garlic, and to a large frying pan, add a few knobs of butter. Once it begins to foam, add in some olive oil and then the garlic. Fry for a few seconds and then start to methodically cook all your mushrooms. Add the fresh thyme and season. Once the mushrooms are $\frac{3}{4}$ cooked, decant your rehydrated porcini's and pat dry. Add them to your cooking mushrooms. Sieve the dark mushroom liquid and set aside.

Once all the mushrooms are cooked, pour them out into a large dish and cover. The black juices that emerge from them whilst cooking are brilliant for adding to the risotto - so don't chuck any of that out. Squeeze the lemon juice all over the mushrooms.

Now for the risotto...Fill up the kettle and put it on to boil. Chop up the onion, and celery and combined with the butter and olive oil, add to a large pot on medium heat. Cook gently with a wooden spoon for about 10mins until all have softened and are translucent.

Mix on your vegetable stock, by adding the liquid stock to the boiling water. Set it aside, close enough to your pot and have a ladle with it.

Add your risotto rice into the pot and turn up the heat a bit. Stir very quickly making sure everything gets coated in the lovely glossy, buttery mixture. Get the wine, or vermouth and add that to the mix. Stir well (amidst lots of hissing and delicious winey fumes) until the alcohol is evaporated.

Begin to add, a ladleful at a time, the vegetable stock. Stir very well all the time as the stock gets absorbed into the rice. This process takes about 15-20 minutes – so is some hard arm work, but worth it in the end if you are conscientious. Keep going until most of the stock is absorbed and taste a piece of rice – it should be soft on the outside but have a sort of *al dente* bite to the center of it. If this is the case, it is now cooked and you may take the pot off the heat. It is at this point, that I like to stir in my strong mushroom 'stock' that was created by soaking the dried porcini's. Stir well.

Immediately take your mushrooms, tip them into the pot of risotto. Give a good stir, from top to bottom. Add in your fresh parsley, and Parmesan - stir again. Taste, and crack some black pepper on top (or some more fresh lemon juice if you like). On serving, add some more Parmesan on top of each bowlful.

YUM!