Risotto (Master Page, with Variations)

Serves 4

Ken's note: TBD

Creamy, loose risotto is a patient, stir-and-add technique rather than a hard one. Learn the basic method once, then change the flavor with the variations below.

Ingredients

- 4–5 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable stock
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 small shallot, finely minced (or ½ small onion)
- 1½ cups Arborio or Carnaroli rice
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ½ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 2–3 Tbsp cold butter, to finish
- Salt and white or black pepper

Method

1. Warm the stock in a saucepan and keep it at a bare simmer. Heat the butter and oil in a wide, heavy pan or Dutch oven over medium heat. Cook the shallot with a pinch of salt until translucent, 3–4 minutes.
2. Stir in the rice and toast 1–2 minutes, until the edges look translucent and it smells nutty. Add the wine and stir until almost absorbed.
3. Add the hot stock one ladle at a time, stirring often, at a gentle simmer. Let each addition be mostly absorbed before adding the next. Continue 18–22 minutes, until the rice is al dente and the risotto is creamy and loose.
4. Off the heat, stir in the Parmesan, then the cold butter a tablespoon at a time to make it glossy. Loosen with more hot stock if needed; it should flow slowly on a plate and will thicken as it sits. Taste and salt at the end (the stock and cheese already bring salt).

Notes

Variations

- **Saffron:** crumble a good pinch (¼ tsp) of saffron threads into the warm stock before you begin so it turns deep gold. This is the base for Seared Sea Bass with Saffron Risotto and Citrus Beurre Blanc.
- **Mushroom:** brown 12 oz sliced mushrooms in butter first and set aside. Stir them back in at the end, with a spoonful of chopped thyme or parsley.
- **Lemon and peas or asparagus:** stir in 1 cup peas or 1 cup chopped blanched asparagus for the last 3 minutes, and finish with the zest and juice of 1 lemon.
- **Tomato and basil:** add 1 cup chopped tomatoes (or a spoonful of tomato paste) with the wine, and stir in torn basil at the end.
- **Sausage and greens:** brown 8 oz Italian sausage, remove, and stir it back in at the end with a handful of spinach or arugula.
- **Seafood:** top with seared scallops or shrimp (see Seafood Basics: Pan-Searing).
- **Leftovers:** shape cold risotto into patties and pan-fry in butter until crisp.