



SECOND HELPING

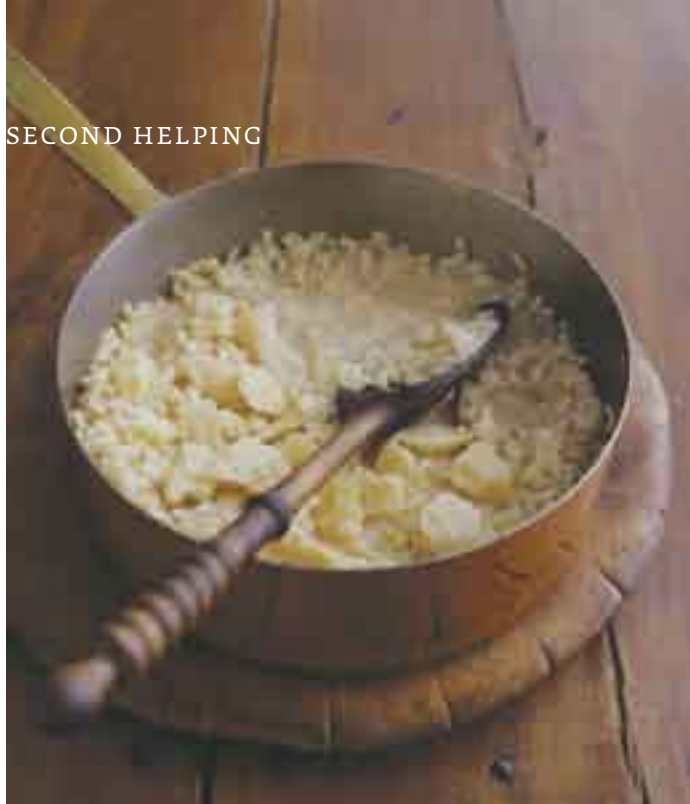
What's an Italian chef's secret to remarkable risotto? Don't pamper it—and use the best ingredients.

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RISOTTO—THE CREAMY, TOOTHsome NORTHERN ITALIAN RICE DISH—is quintessential slow food. Contrary to popular belief, it's not arduous or time-consuming (only about 30 minutes total), but it is best when made in the traditional way with the right ingredients, according to Roberto Carcangiu, executive chef at the new Academia Barilla culinary center in Parma. A Northern Italian native, Carcangiu tutors students in the art of risotto. He stresses that Italian *superfino* rice has the desired amount of starch to yield creamy results, and that occasional attentiveness is just as good as constant stirring. While Carcangiu is an adherent to the classic risotto technique, he enthusiastically encourages creativity with flavor and garnishes. Try his recipes and risotto pointers on the following pages.

ABOVE Flavor abounds in Gorgonzola and Pear Risotto with Crispy Pancetta. Caramelized pears, hazelnuts, and herbs top this sweet-savory rice that is flavored with Gorgonzola crumbles, orange peel, slow-cooked Italian bacon, and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

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RISOTTO PARMIGIANO

LEFT TO RIGHT Rich, nutty Parmigiano-Reggiano is chisled into small, granular chunks and stirred into the Risotto Parmigiano after the rice is cooked. (See page 102 for more on this native Northern Italian cheese.) To finish the dish, Chef Roberto Carcangiu tops it with a homemade Parmigiano-Reggiano wafer, thin Granny Smith apple slices, and crisp rounds of pancetta. .

GORGONZOLA AND PEAR RISOTTO WITH CRISPY PANCETTA

Pancetta (*pan-Cheh-tuh*) is Italian bacon that is cut into round spiral slices. Look for it at Italian grocers or meat counters. You can substitute regular bacon.

- 2 OZ. THINLY SLICED PANCETTA
- 1 1/3 CUPS ARBORIO RICE
- 4 1/4 CUPS VEGETABLE BROTH (SEE RECIPE, PAGE 112, OR CANNED VEGETABLE BROTH, HEATED)
- 3 TBSP. BUTTER
- 2 MEDIUM PEARS, PEELED IF DESIRED, CORED, AND THINLY SLICED
- 2 TBSP. HAZELNUTS (FILBERTS)
- 2 TSP. SNIPPED FRESH ROSEMARY
- 2 TSP. SNIPPED FRESH SAGE
- 4 OZ. FRESHLY GRATED PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO CHEESE (1 CUP)
- 4 OZ. GORGONZOLA CHEESE, CRUMBLD (1 CUP)
- THIN ORANGE PEEL STRIPS

Place pancetta in a single layer in a shallow baking pan. Bake, uncovered, in 225° oven about 1 hour or until crisp; chop and set aside.

In a dry, medium saucepan heat rice until it is almost hot, stirring occasionally. Carefully add 1 cup of the hot broth. Continue to cook and stir until most of the liquid is absorbed. Continue adding broth while cooking, 1/2 cup at a time, when previously added broth is mostly absorbed (still a little wet), stirring frequently (not constantly) and adjusting heat as needed until rice is almost tender but still a bit chewy (*al dente*). This will take 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add pears and nuts. Cook until pears are lightly browned, stirring frequently to brown evenly. Stir in rosemary and sage. Remove from heat.

Remove rice from heat. Stir in Parmigiano and Gorgonzola cheeses; let rest 1 minute.

To serve, spoon rice onto plates; divide pear mixture atop each. Sprinkle with chopped pancetta and orange peel. Makes 4 servings.

RISOTTO PARMIGIANO

- 3 TBSP. BUTTER, DIVIDED
- 1/4 CUP CHOPPED WHITE ONION
- 1 1/4 CUPS CARNAROLI, VIALONE NANO, OR ARBORIO RICE
- 4 CUPS VEGETABLE BROTH (SEE RECIPE, PAGE 112, OR CANNED VEGETABLE BROTH, HEATED)
- 2 1/2 OZ. PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO CHEESE, CUT INTO PEBBLE-SIZE PIECES (2/3 CUP)
- 1/3 CUP FINELY CHOPPED GRANNY SMITH APPLE
- 2 TBSP. FRISANTE (DRY SPARKLING ITALIAN WINE) OR DRY WHITE WINE
- DASH GROUND CINNAMON
- GOOD-QUALITY BALSAMIC VINEGAR (PREFERABLY 10- TO 12-YEAR-OLD AGED BALSAMIC VINEGAR FROM MODENA)
- PANCETTA CRISPS (OPTIONAL)
- PARMESAN WAFERS (OPTIONAL)
- THIN SLICES OF GRANNY SMITH APPLE

In a small, microwave-safe dish place 2 tablespoons butter and chopped onion. Cover and microwave on 100% power (high) for 90 seconds or until onion is translucent and

softened. (Chef Carcangiu uses a microwave oven for this step; a sautépan over medium-low heat would work fine as well.) Set aside.

In a medium saucepan cook and stir rice in remaining 1 tablespoon hot butter over medium heat until rice is lightly golden brown and has a nutty aroma, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in 1 cup of the vegetable broth. Continue to cook and stir until liquid is absorbed. Continue to add broth while cooking, 1/2 cup at a time, when previously added broth is mostly absorbed (still a little wet), stirring frequently (not constantly) and adjusting heat as needed until rice is almost tender (*al dente*) and still a little soupy. This will take 15 to 18 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in onion, cheese, chopped apple, wine, and cinnamon.

Garnish each plate with a thin drizzle of balsamic vinegar. Top risotto with a *Pancetta Crisp*, a *Parmesan Wafer*, and apple slices. Serves 4.

PANCETTA CRISPS: Place a thin slice of pancetta (in spiral shape) in the bottom of a 2-quart square microwave-safe baking dish. Place a smaller microwave-safe glass dish on top of the pancetta to cover it completely and hold it flat. Microwave on 100% power (high) for 2 to 3 minutes or until crisp and like jerky. Repeat with 3 more slices. Or, cook on a stovetop over low heat, using a bacon press to flatten.

PARMESAN WAFERS: Line a baking sheet with a sheet of parchment paper. Spread 1 tablespoon of finely shredded Parmigiano-Reggiano into a 3 1/2-inch circle. Sprinkle with

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RISOTTO WITH SHRIMP RAGU
AND BASIL-LEMON CREAM

In a large saucepan, heat rice over medium heat, stirring frequently, until it starts to brown. Stir in 1 cup of hot shrimp shell-vegetable broth. Continue to cook and stir until most of liquid is absorbed. Continue adding broth while cooking, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time, when previously added broth is mostly absorbed (still a little wet), stirring frequently (not constantly) and adjusting heat as needed until rice is almost tender but still a bit chewy (al dente). This will take about 15 to 16 minutes. Stir in wine and Basil-Lemon Cream. Cook and stir until most of liquid has been absorbed. Season with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet heat 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add garlic, thyme, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper. Add shrimp; cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes or until shrimp turns opaque. Stir in tomato.

Divide shrimp among 4 plates. Top with risotto and garnishes. Makes 4 servings.

GARNISHES: Cut peel from $\frac{1}{2}$ of a lemon in 1-inch wide strips. With a sharp knife cut peel into feather shapes. Line a 12-inch round platter with parchment paper; brush paper lightly with oil. Cut another piece of parchment of same size and brush with oil.

Place lemon peel, reserved tomato peel, basil leaves, and sprigs of thyme and rosemary on the parchment paper. Top with other sheet of parchment paper, oiled side down. Weigh paper down with a glass baking dish. Microcook on 100% power (high) for 3 to 4 minutes or until dry (watch carefully to avoid possible burning). Cool; use to garnish risotto.

VEGETABLE BROTH: In a medium saucepan, cook 1 medium onion, finely chopped, in 1 tablespoon olive oil until golden brown. Coarsely chop 1 medium carrot, 1 stalk celery, and 1 medium tomato (optional). Add vegetables to onion. Add $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups water, 1 teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme. Bring to boiling. Reduce heat. Cover; simmer 45 minutes or until vegetables are soft. Strain liquid. Discard vegetables. Makes $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups.

a few leaves of fresh thyme. Repeat to make 4 circles total, keeping them 2 inches apart. Bake in a 350° oven for 7 minutes or until each is melted into a golden brown wafer. Remove wafers from parchment and quickly mold into a horn shape around a cone mold or wooden spoon handle. Cool.

RISOTTO WITH SHRIMP RAGU AND BASIL-LEMON CREAM

12 OZ. SHRIMP

- 1 RECIPE VEGETABLE BROTH (SEE RECIPE, PAGE 112, OR CANNED VEGETABLE BROTH, HEATED)
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ CUP PACKED FRESH BASIL LEAVES, SNIPPED
 - 1 TBSP. FINELY SHREDDED LEMON PEEL
 - 2 TBSP. LEMON JUICE
 - 2 TBSP. CRUSHED ICE
 - 3 TBSP. EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, DIVIDED
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ CUP FRESHLY GRATED PARMIGIANO CHEESE
 - $1\frac{1}{2}$ CUPS VIALONE NANO RICE, CARNAROLI RICE, OR ARBORIO RICE
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ CUP SPARKLING WHITE WINE OR DRY WHITE WINE SUCH AS SAUVIGNON BLANC
 - SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
 - 2 CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED
 - 2 TBSP. SNIPPED FRESH THYME
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ TSP. SALT
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ TSP. FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
 - 2 MEDIUM RED AND/OR YELLOW TOMATOES, PEELED (RESERVE PEELS) AND CHOPPED
- GARNISHES (ON PAGE 112)

Peel and devein shrimp, reserving shells. Add shells with vegetables when preparing Vegetable Broth for risotto (or to canned broth;

strain before adding to risotto). Coarsely chop shrimp; set aside.

For Basil-Lemon Cream, in a small bowl or glass combine basil, finely shredded lemon peel, lemon juice, and crushed ice. Using an immersion blender, blend mixture until combined. Gradually add 2 tablespoons of the oil in a thin steady stream (the ice will help to thicken the mixture). Stir in cheese. This cream can also be prepared in a blender.

Chef's tips to Risotto "perfetto"

THE BEST RICE

Use Italian superfino rice such as Vialone Nano, carnaroli, or arborio. These plump, starchy grains give risotto its chewy, creamy texture. Toasting the rice is also key. This helps it maintain its shape, instead of getting mushy.

LIQUIDS

Stir in the broth—it should always be hot—in small batches. This allows the rice to soak up the hot liquid and yields a creamy risotto.

STIRRING

Check the risotto every few minutes, giving it a quick stir to avoid sticking, and adding broth. It doesn't need constant stirring. Chef Carcangiu keeps a lid on the pot, except when stirring.

COOKING TIME & DONENESS

This can vary according to rice type. It should taste slightly chewy (al dente) and still be creamy. Use the recipe cook times as a guide.

SERVE IMMEDIATELY

Remove from heat and serve right away. It continues to cook as it sits and can get pasty.