

Risotto is not a finicky dish to make. Picture yourself in a large Italian farmhouse kitchen, with a big apron tied firmly around your middle. Put a couple of pins in your hair to keep things neat. The stove has been on most of the day while you're making bread. You have a large pot on the back burner with fresh chicken stock, never wasting anything that you've either grown or carefully purchased in the market. Family members have come and gone, chatting as they go about their chores. During this time you've been sautéing onions, adding rice and then slowly have added spoonfuls of the chicken stock with a few splashes of wine, while you stir and talk. When the family gathers round, you add in some grated hard cheese, and maybe some tender vegetables with a knob of butter. Without paying too much attention, you've created a beautiful glossy dish of risotto, warm and creamy, one of the best comfort foods.

This is a social dish – prepare your ingredients before hand, and enjoy a glass of wine while you cook and visit. Don't let it be pretentious. When it's ready, serve it simply. The rest of the meal can be served after.

Risotto with Shrimp and Peas

Serves 4

Ingredients

4 c chicken stock
¾ c dry white wine (½ c + ¼ c)
1 large, fist-sized yellow onion 6 – 8 oz, finely chopped
2 shallots 2 – 3 oz, finely chopped
2 T butter (divided in half)
1 T olive oil
1 c Arborio rice
½ lb or 227gr fresh or thawed, raw, peeled shrimp (I've used West Coast Spotted "Prawns" in this recipe – we don't have prawns in our waters, but these are large, so colloquially are called prawns.)
1 c frozen, good quality baby peas
1 c freshly grated Parmesan or Asiago cheese (3½ oz or 100 gr)
4 nicely trimmed green onions, finely sliced

Directions

In a medium saucepan, bring your stock to a boil. Add in ½ c of white wine. Reduce heat to low to maintain a gentle simmer.
Over medium heat, in a large, deep skillet, or pot, melt 1 T of the butter with the oil. Add in the onion and shallot, and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently until transparent, but not caramelized.
Add in the rice, and stir until the kernel is transparent, showing the germ clearly. When glossy (about a minute) add in the remaining ¼ c of wine. Stir until the wine has been completely absorbed by the rice.
Using a ladle that holds about ½ c of liquid, add 1 ladle of simmering stock to the rice, stirring constantly until all the liquid is absorbed.
Repeat this until all the stock has been used.
This will take 30 – 40 minutes.
Taste test the rice to make sure is almost cooked, and creamy, before adding any of the other ingredients. You may need to add a bit of water (not more than ¼ c at a time) to allow the rice to continue cooking without becoming too thick.

When the rice is just about done, add in the shrimp and peas. They will cook in the hot rice mixture for 4 – 5 minutes. Do not let them overcook. Add in the cheese, the remaining 1T of butter, and the chopped green onions. When the shrimp is opaque, the risotto is ready to be served, and enjoyed. Sprinkle with a bit of cheese or green onions to serve.

Option: replace the peas with blanched & chopped asparagus. Also, if you are using frozen shrimp, thaw them in cold water in the fridge before using, and drain well.