

Sweet Pea and Pancetta Risotto

Serves 5 as a main course, 10 as a side dish

Preparation time: 30-45 Minutes



Risotto is a creamy rice dish from North Italy. It gets its creaminess from slowly releasing the starches of the rice by stirring. Though it takes a while to make this dish, it is definitely worth it.

Ingredients

¼# pancetta, diced into ¼ inch cubes**
1 oz. extra virgin olive oil
1 cup finely diced white onions
1# Arborio or Carnorli Rice (risotto rice)
½ cup chardonnay or other dry white wine
2 qts hot vegetable or chicken stock
1 cup fresh English peas, blanched for 30 seconds*
2 oz butter, chilled, and cubed
3 oz grated fresh Parmesan cheese, (not dried)
Kosher salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
4 oz. pea tendrils
juice of ½ lemon
1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil or white truffle oil
oven roasted tomatoes, for garnish

Procedure

1. Place pancetta in a cold sauté pan. Bring up to medium heat, stirring occasionally.
2. Render pancetta until crispy. With a slotted spoon, remove pancetta to a plate lined with paper towels, and set aside. Discard remaining grease.
3. Heat 1 oz. extra virgin olive oil in a separate, straight sided, heavy bottom sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onions and sauté until soft. Do not brown.
4. Add the rice and sauté until well coated with fat.
5. Add the wine and stir until wine has been absorbed.
6. Season with salt to taste.
7. Using a 4 oz ladle, add one ladle of stock to the rice. Stir the rice over medium heat with a wooden spoon until the stock is absorbed, and the rice is almost dry. It is important to stir the risotto constantly in order to extract the starch from the rice.
8. Add another ladle of stock and repeat procedure. Do not add more than one ladleful of stock at a time.
9. Continue procedure until all stock has been added and the risotto is tender, but not mushy. This should take about ½ an hour.
10. Add the rendered pancetta, and the blanched peas.
11. Remove from the heat. Stir in the cold butter, and Parmesan cheese. Stir until completely melted, and creamy.
12. Taste and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.
13. Toss the pea tendrils with lemon juice, and olive oil or truffle oil. Season with salt and pepper

* English peas, or pod peas need to be removed from the pod, and cooked in boiling salted water for 30 seconds, then removed and put in a bowl of ice water to chill. Remove from water and place on paper towels to drain until needed.

** Pancetta is the Italian version of bacon. It is made from sides of pork belly and curled into a tight roll and wrapped in casing to hold its cylindrical shape. It is cured with salt and a lot of pepper, but not smoked. If Pancetta is unavailable, then thickly sliced bacon that has been diced can be substituted.