

Guest Blog Recipe

Grilled Shrimp & Apricot Risotto

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Risotto is the king of rice dishes. Fried rice, paella, curry—they got nothing a proper risotto. The difference is in the rice grains. Risotto is made with Arborio rice, a short grain super-starchy, creamy variety cultivated in Italy.

But it's more than the grains themselves that distinguish risotto from other rice dishes. The unique method of cooking the Arborio is truly what makes risotto special. Hot vegetable or chicken stock is added to the cooking Arborio grains one ladle at a time. When the rice absorbs all the liquid, another ladle is added. This process, along with constant stirring, extracts all the starch from the grains, giving risotto its characteristic creaminess.

For this version of risotto, we cooked in this week's apricots from Beechwood Orchards. We anchored the savory element of this dish with John Glick's sweet onions and finished it with mint and basil to really drive home the summery flavors. And because it's grill season, we figured, hey, why not throw some shrimp on the barbie too.

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

- 10 large shrimp
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 3 cups vegetable stock (approx.)
- 1 large sweet onion
- 1 lb apricots
- 1/4 cup cream cheese (as per Naomi's Italian grandma's secret recipe)
- 3 sprigs of mint
- 3 sprigs of basil
- 1 cup chopped parsley
- 2 lemons, juiced and zested
- 1 Tbl smoked paprika
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt to taste



Directions:

Begin by shelling and deveining the shrimp. Transfer them to a medium mixing bowl and pour in the half a cup of olive oil. Toss in lemon zest, parsley, paprika and a dash of salt. Mix thoroughly, ensuring the ingredients are evenly distributed over the shrimp. Refrigerate for at least an hour to give the marinade time sink in.



Bring the three cups of vegetable stock (or water) to a simmer in a small pot.

Dice the onions and sweat in olive oil in a large stock pot over medium heat until they become translucent. Add the rice and toast in the pan until it begins to pop and crackle. That sound is the shells of the rice grains splitting, which will allow it to cook more quickly and evenly.

Add the simmering vegetable stock one ladle at a time, allowing the rice to absorb the liquid incrementally. Stir the rice almost constantly to agitate more and more starch from the grains

While the rice is cooking, slice and pit the apricots, cutting them into eighths.

After about 15 minutes the rice should be close to finished. Check its doneness by chewing a small bite. If the grains of rice stick in your molars, the risotto needs more time.

When the rice is close to finished, add the apricots; they don't need much time to cook.

Turn off the heat, and stir in the cream cheese, mint and basil. The risotto should be very creamy and loose enough so the grains don't try to clump together.

Meanwhile, throw the shrimp on the barbie and grill away.