

WILD MUSHROOM RISOTTO
with PONZI DOLCETTO

Piemonte is the home of Dolcetto as well as Barolo, Barbaresco and the famed white truffles d'Alba. Here in the Willamette Valley, we're fortunate to grow and produce lovely Dolcetto. We also have wild mushrooms in quantity and variety. Just as the wine harvest is ending, the nearby forests begin their mysterious production of chanterelles, porcini, matsutake, hedge hogs, lobsters, black trumpets and, if the forager and the diner are really fortunate, Oregon white truffles. At Ponzi we're currently at mid-harvest--it's time for Wild Mushroom Risotto!

Risotto, like polenta, another of our favorite harvest dishes, somehow acquired a reputation for tedious and tricky preparation. The only trick to making perfect risotto is to start with great raw ingredients and spend 18-20 minutes giving the process relatively focused attention. Once you master the technique, you can be quite creative with ingredients; just look for what's in season and it will likely flavor a tasty risotto. If you come across a cache of wild mushrooms, your risotto will be inevitably be fabulous...worthy of an excellent Dolcetto.

The consistency of risotto is controversial and personal. If you like your risotto slightly al dente, that's fine...if you prefer risotto soft or even a little soupy, that's great too. Italians make it all ways, so you can be confident of your authenticity...any way, it's your authentic risotto!

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INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb. fresh chanterelles or other mushrooms or combinations, sliced as necessary
- 3 t olive oil
- 1/4 C fresh thyme, chopped
- 2 large shallots, diced
- Squeeze of fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 C Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 quarts chicken stock
- 1/2 C butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 C Arborio or Carnaroli rice
- 3/4 C medium bodied dry white wine (leftover Pinot Gris?)
- 3/4 C freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated

TECHNIQUE:

1. Prepare mushrooms by cleaning as gently as possible. Don't wash unless really necessary as they are fragile; use a soft brush or cloth. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan and quickly sauté mushrooms with shallots, thyme, 1/4 C parsley and lemon juice. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
2. Heat the chicken stock in a saucepan and keep warm.
3. Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan, add onion and sauté until soft.
4. Add the rice and sauté, stirring constantly, until rice absorbs the butter and begins to look transparent.
5. Add the wine and boil until it is almost evaporated.

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6. Reduce heat and add 2 ladles of warm stock, stir fairly frequently.
7. Add sautéed mushrooms.
8. As rice dries, keep adding ladles of stock in small amounts until reaching the desired consistency and tenderness of rice.
9. Add 1/2 C grated cheese and stir in. Adjust seasonings.
10. Serve in shallow bowls, garnish with reserved parsley. Additional grated Parmigiano-Reggiano may be served to accompany risotto.

NOTE: *I often add a few peas or other green vegetable to this risotto, mainly to add color and a bit more texture.*