

Brown Rice Risotto with Winter Squash

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INGREDIENTS:

- Salt
- 1 cup short- or medium-grain brown rice
- 3 tablespoons olive oil or butter
- 1 medium onion or large shallot, chopped
- Black pepper
- About 2 cups winter squash in roughly 3/4-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup dry white wine or water
- About 4 cups any stock (shrimp, chicken, lobster, vegetable, pork) or water
- About 1 cup bite-size pieces of meat or shellfish (precooked is O.K.): sausage, pork, lobster, shrimp, chicken, etc.
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan, optional
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh basil or parsley

Preparation:

1. Bring medium pot of water to a boil and salt it. Stir in brown rice, adjust heat so that water bubbles steadily, and cook without stirring, until rice is swollen and half-tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Drain. (If you want to wait a bit before proceeding, spread the rice on a platter or sheet tray so it cools.)
2. Put oil in a large, deep skillet over medium heat. When it's hot, add onion or shallot and cook, stirring occasionally, until it softens, 3 to 5 minutes. Add rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until it is glossy and coated with oil, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then stir in the squash; add the wine. Stir and let liquid bubble away.
3. Begin to add the stock, about 1/2 cup at a time, stirring after each addition and every minute or so. When the stock is just about evaporated, add more. Keep the heat medium to medium-high and stir frequently.
4. When rice is just about tender and mixture is creamy, stir in shellfish or meat and continue to cook, adding more liquid if necessary, until rice is tender. The final dish should be quite moist but not soupy. Add Parmesan if you're using it, then taste and add more salt or pepper (or both) if necessary. Garnish with basil or parsley and serve.

Yield: 4 Servings

TOTAL TIME: about 45 minutes