

## Il Risotto

*Risotto* is a typical dish from Northern Italy, particularly from the regions *Piemonte* and *Lombardia*, but you can eat it everywhere *nel Bel Paese*. We use specific varieties of rice, such as *riso arborio*, that remain creamy and have body at the same time. Rice in Italy is grown mostly in the so-called Padan Plain (*Pianura Padana*) or Po Valley (*valle del Po*), Po being the longest river in Italy. During class, we cooked three kinds of *risotto*:

- *con funghi e zafferano* (If we had cooked it with only *zafferano*, it would have been *risotto alla milanese* — Milano style.)
- *con asparagi*
- *al radicchio e salsiccia*

You can make risotto with essentially anything: peas, pumpkin, zucchini, artichoke, shrimp, seafood, gorgonzola cheese, lemon, herbs ... whatever you have in the fridge. Experiment!

### Ingredienti

It serves 4 ... depending on who is invited for dinner. On average you should consider 80 g per person (two fistfuls), but I prefer 100 g.

- Olive oil (*olio d'oliva*) — max a couple of spoonfuls
- *Sale*
- One small *cipolla* (you can also use scallion, i.e. *scalogno*) and/or 1 clove of *aglio*
- Half to one bouillon cube (vegetable or not, it is up to you)
- 400 g of arborio rice
- One spoonful of butter (*burro*)
- Parmigiano cheese (*formaggio Parmigiano*)
- In a few years you can add one glass of wine
- Optional: One bunch of italian parsley (*prezzemolo*)

and, based on which option you choose:

- About 150 g of fresh mushrooms (*funghi*) or 50 g of dried mushrooms. If you use dried mushrooms, soak them in warm water for at least 20 minutes. In class we used shitake mushrooms. If you find *porcini*, they are ideal.
- Saffron powder (*zafferano*)
- Asparagi
- A few Italian sausages (*salsiccia*)
- One head of *radicchio* (also called Italian chicory)

## Directions

1. Make a *soffritto* (sweat) on medium-low heat with chopped onion (options 1,2) or garlic (option 3)
2. In the meantime, boil at least 1.5 L of water (yes, we measure the water in liters, *litri*.)
3. When the vegetables have softened, add the bouillon cube (it will melt).
  - \*Option 1: add the chopped mushrooms. After a few minutes, add the rice and turn up the heat.
  - \*Option 2: add the asparagi (washed and chopped — discard the tough ends). After a few minutes, add the rice and turn up the heat.
  - \*Option 3: add the radicchio (washed and finely chopped). When it gets soft, add the sausage (without skin, in small pieces) and turn up the heat. When the sausage is cooked, add the rice.
4. Toast the rice until it is lightly translucent.
5. (At this point you can add a glass of wine and wait until the alcohol evaporates.)
6. Turn down the heat to a simmer. Keep adding boiling water and DO NOT stir continuously. Season to taste with salt (you can also add pepper and other spices)
  - \*Option 1: fill a glass with boiling water and mix the saffron powder. Add it to the rice.
7. Continue to add water and stir from time to time until the rice is tender (but not too tender, taste it!). It should take about 15-20 minutes.
8. It is time for the *mantecatura*: take off the heat, stir butter and some grated parmesan.
9. You can sprinkle with minced Italian parsley.

Like with pasta, we want the risotto *al dente* (literally to the tooth, such that the teeth find still a little resistance). We sometimes say that the risotto is *all'onda* (literally to the wave) to indicate how risotto "flows" when served onto a plate.

Note: In the traditional recipe you prepare the broth and add it, instead of putting the bouillon cube in the sweat and adding boiling water. The disadvantage is that you then need to wash an extra pot.

*Buon appetito!* Enjoy your meal!

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

ES.S41 Speak Italian With Your Mouth Full  
Spring 2012

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.