

Tomato-Mascarpone Risotto

Makes: 8 side-dish servings (or 4 main-dish)

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

Risotto is a high-starch, short-grain rice that has the ability to absorb liquids and release starch, which makes it stickier than regular long-grain rice. When it's properly cooked, it will be creamy and the rice will still have a slight bite to it. You must tend to it with frequent stirring during the process of adding a little bit of broth at a time to the rice while it's cooking. But your labor will be one of love in the end when you have a tomato-based, mascarpone-infused, creamy bowl of rice to sample.

3 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup finely chopped onion (about ½ large)
1 ½ cups shredded zucchini
1 large garlic clove, minced
1 ½ cups Arborio rice
1 cup dry white wine (Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio)
½ teaspoon kosher salt
½ cup mascarpone cheese (see Tips)
2 tablespoons freshly chopped basil
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

In a medium saucepan, combine the broth and tomato sauce and heat over low heat until just warmed, 4 to 5 minutes.

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the zucchini and garlic and continue to cook, stirring, until those are softened too, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until it is glossy in appearance, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the wine, stir and let the liquid evaporate. Stir in the salt. Add the warmed tomato broth ½ cup at a time, stirring occasionally. When the broth has just about been completely absorbed by the rice, add another ½ cup. Continue to cook and stir and add broth in ½ cup increments until all of the broth has been absorbed and the risotto is tender, but still firm to the bite, 20 to 25 minutes.

Remove the pan from heat and stir in the cheese, basil and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

Gluten-Free Adaptable: Use a brand of broth that is known to be gluten-free.

Dairy-Free Adaptable: Leave out the cheese.

Tips:

- If you don't have access to mascarpone cheese, use softened cream cheese instead.
- Be sure to stir often during the cooking process to keep the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pan.
- Serve this as a side dish alongside roasted chicken or grilled Italian sausages.

Change It Up! The mascarpone cheese makes the risotto creamy and rich. Leave it out if you would just like a tomato-zucchini risotto.