

Roast Butternut Squash Risotto

Butternut squash has become very popular, almost ubiquitous, and it's an orange colour so it must be good for you. I think it is at its best roasted when the full flavour develops. As well as making a good accompaniment to a Sunday roast or, better still, a Sunday barbecued joint, roasted butternut squash shines very well in this risotto recipe.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	15 mins
cooking time:	1 hr

Ingredients

1 butternut squash
1 tbs coriander seeds
1 dried red chilli, seeds removed
Salt & pepper
olive oil
100g butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 rib celery, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 wineglass dry white vermouth
320g risotto rice
75g Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
1 ltr chicken stock, hot

Method

Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5. Cut the butternut squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds with a spoon. (If you can be bothered, pick the seeds out of the pith and reserve them for later. They can be roasted and added to the dish.) Cut the squash into 1cm slices. Don't bother to skin the squash, the apparently waxy, hard skin gets softer with cooking.

Crumble the dried red chilli into a pestle and mortar with the coriander seeds and a pinch of salt and pepper. Grind all this together, mix with a tablespoon or so of olive oil and rub this all over the butternut squash slices. Put the squash in a roasting tray and cook in the oven for about 30 minutes. If you've reserved the squash seeds, stir them in to the roasting tray and roast for another 5 - 10 minutes, otherwise just leave the squash for the additional time. Remove the squash from the oven and allow it to cool enough to handle. It will have shrivelled a little and be quite soft now; chop it into chunks of about 1cm.

When you are ready, make the risotto. Get the stock hot in a separate pan ready to add to the risotto in batches. In your chosen risotto pan, melt half the butter over moderate heat. Reduce the heat to low, add the finely chopped onion, celery and garlic and fry gently for about 10 minutes to soften without colouring. Now add the rice; increase the heat slightly and, stirring constantly so as not to burn it, cook the rice for about 2 minutes when it should begin to look a little translucent. Add the vermouth and let the alcohol bubble off so the angels can have it. :)

Once the rice has absorbed the vermouth, you can start adding the stock, which should be very hot so as to keep the simmer going. Add the hot stock one ladle at a time. With the first ladelful only, add about half a teaspoon of salt. Adjust the heat so that the stock simmers and the rice does not cook too quickly. Stir the rice frequently to help release the starch and make the traditional creamy consistency of risotto. As each ladelful of stock is absorbed, add another and continue simmering and stirring. In this manner, it should take about 15 - 20 minutes to get all the stock incorporated.

Now stir in the diced, roasted butternut squash. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper now, remembering that the Parmesan cheese (added next) is salty so go easy. Add the

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parmesan cheese with the remaining half of the butter and stir again. Cover the pan with a lid and let it sit for two minutes; this reheats the squash but most importantly makes the risotto wonderfully unctious. (Now there's a posh word for some posh nosh.)

If you've roasted the squash seeds, sprinkle them on top. A few sage leaves quickly fried in butter wouldn't go amiss, either.

This really just needs a good leafy salad, appropriately dressed, for accompaniment.