

Risotto with Asparagus

(Serves 6)

Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

1	Lb	Asparagus, fresh
5	Cups	Chicken, lamb or veal stock
3	TBS	Butter, unsalted
2	TBS	Olive oil
2	TBS	Onions, chopped very fine
2	Cups	Arborio rice
		Black pepper, freshly ground
¼	Cup	Parmigiano-reggiano cheese, freshly grated
1	TBS	Parsley, chopped very fine

Instructions:

1. Grasp each asparagus spear at their ends and snap off the bottom end. Discard the bottom end and wash remaining spears thoroughly.
2. In a pan large enough for all the asparagus to lie flat in, add enough water to come 2 inches up the sides of the pan, 1 tablespoon of salt, and bring the water to a boil. Turn the heat to medium high and add the asparagus and cover the pan. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes after the water returns to boil, depending on the freshness and thickness of the stalks. Remove asparagus when just turning tender and plunge them into an ice bath to stop cooking. Reserve the cooking liquid.
3. Cut 1 ½ inch of tips of asparagus and set aside. Cut the rest of the stalks into ½ inch pieces and put aside in the same bowl.
4. Add enough stock to the asparagus blanching water to make 6 cups of liquid and bring it to a very slow, steady simmer on a burner near where you'll be cooking the risotto.
5. Put 1 tablespoon of butter, the olive oil and the chopped onions in a sturdy saucepan, turn the heat to medium high, and cook the onion, stirring until it becomes translucent.
6. Add the rice, stirring quickly and thoroughly until the grains are coated well. Add ½ cup of the simmering stock, and cook the rice, stirring constantly with a long wooden spoon, wiping the sides and bottom of the pot clean as you stir, until all the liquid is gone. You should not stop stirring and you must be sure to scrape the bottom of the pot to avoid sticking.
7. When there is no more liquid in the pot, add another ½ cup, continuing always to stir in the manner described above. Maintain heat at a lively pace.
8. Begin to taste the rice after 20 minutes of cooking. It is done when it is tender, but firm to the bite, with barely enough liquid to make the consistency somewhat runny. Off heat, add the reserved asparagus, a few grindings of pepper, the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and all the grated Parmesan, and stir thoroughly until the cheese melts and clings to the rice.
9. Taste and correct for salt. Mix in the chopped parsley and serve.

Source: **Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking;** Marcella Hazan



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