

Pumpkin, Sage & Prosciutto Risotto

I absolutely adore making Risotto. There is something so therapeutic about the cooking process, the gradual adding and stirring that I find totally relaxing. I always set myself up with the ingredients prepped and ready so that I am not caught out at the last minute and after quite a bit of practice, I have gotten it down to a fine art, an enjoyable one at that. I recently watched a cooking show where the chef made a pea risotto and to really infuse the rice with the pea flavour, he puree'd a portion of the peas, as well as using whole peas. I used the same concept with this recipe, using baked chunks of pumpkin, pumpkin puree and crispy pumpkin strips to really get that flavour going on. The addition of pumpkins favourite friend sage, some pine nuts and gorgeous, salty, crispy prosciutto really amped up the flavour and texture scale of this winning dish.

This could easily be a vegetarian dish, just omit the prosciutto....

Prep time: 30 Minutes

Cooking time: 30 Minutes

Budget \$\$

Serves 4

Olive oil for frying

80gm of butter

2 cloves of garlic, finely minced

600gm of Jap or Kent pumpkin

1 large brown onion, finely diced

8 sage leaves, thinly sliced

12 sage leaves, for garnish

2 long celery stalks, finely chopped

1.5 cups of arborio rice

1 cup of dry white wine

1 litre of chicken or vegetable stock

100ml of cream

1/4 cup of freshly grated parmesan

100gm of prosciutto

1/4 cup of toasted pine nuts

1 bag of baby spinach leaves

Sea salt and cracked pepper

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

To prepare the pumpkin, take about 2/3rds and remove the skin and seeds. Cut the pumpkin into little bite sized cubes and place on a large lined baking tray. Drizzle with a little olive oil and season with sea salt and pepper.

Once you have the risotto up and running, bake in the oven for approximately 20 minutes or until golden and crispy.

Take the remaining pumpkin and remove the skin and seeds before cutting into larger chunks. Take one of the chunks and use a peeler to slice ribbons (about a handful) and then place the rest of the pumpkin into a steamer. Steam for about 10 minutes or until tender. Once tender, remove from the steamer and place in a small bowl with the cream and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Use a fork to mash the pumpkin as smoothly as you can.

Line a baking tray with paper and lay the prosciutto slices on it along with the pumpkin ribbons. Bake in the oven until the prosciutto is nice and crispy and the ribbons are golden. Again, place this in the oven once the risotto is up and running so everything is ready at the same time.

Pour the stock into a saucepan and bring to a gentle simmer.

Heat a heavy based pan and add a drizzle of oil and about 20gm of the butter. Once bubbling, fry the onion until soft before adding the garlic, sliced sage and celery. Fry until the celery is just tender and then add your rice. I have found the secret to a really good risotto is making sure that you toast the rice really well. You don't want it to burn but the more you toast the rice, the more it holds its starch and the less gluggy your risotto will be. Once you have toasted the rice for a good minute or so, pour in the wine and stir to combine. Allow the rice to absorb the wine on a medium/low heat before adding your stock, a couple of ladles at a time and stirring frequently until the rice is almost cooked. It should still have a bit of bite to it.

Over the heat, stir the puree'd pumpkin through the risotto with the grated parmesan, adding more stock if needed and then just before serving, fold through the baby spinach leaves, followed by the baked pumpkin chunks.

Heat a small frypan and add the remaining butter. Once bubbling, fry the sage leaves for a minute or so until crispy. Remove the sage from the butter and

place on a piece of paper towel. Reheat the butter if needed just before serving.

To serve, divide the risotto between four serving bowls. Break the prosciutto into largish pieces and place on top of the risotto along with the pumpkin ribbons. Top with crispy sage leaves, toasted pine nuts and drizzle with the sage infused butter. I really hope you enjoy!

leftover Sage? You might like to cook this.....

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