

Lemon and Toasted Almond Risotto

By AntoniaJames

Here's a bright-tasting risotto that pairs perfectly with just about any roast you might want to serve during the holidays. The chewy, flavorful oat groats create a starchy broth that makes this vegan dish creamy without any dairy products. You can also use cooked farro, instead of oat groats, if you prefer. Enjoy!! ;o)

Serves 4 to 6

- 1/3 cup raw almonds, coarsely chopped (Measure before chopping; and feel free to use more, to taste.)
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 1 cup finely chopped shallots
 - 2 cloves of garlic, coarsely chopped
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - 1 cup Arborio rice
 - 1/2 cup Sauvignon Blanc (plus a glass for you to enjoy while stirring the pot!)
 - 3 to 4 cups light vegetable broth (best to use homemade -- see note below**)
 - 1/4 cup finely chopped parsley leaves
 - Juice and zest of two small Meyer lemons (or one medium regular lemon)
 - 1 cup cooked whole oats (or "oat groats," as they're often called), in their cooking liquid (up to about 1/4 cup of liquid), optional but recommended
1. Heat the oil in a wide heavy pot. (I use my enameled cast iron braising pan for this.) Add the chopped almonds and cook just until fragrant, stirring all the while. Remove immediately, once most of them have started to turn light brown. Work quickly, as they can go from light brown to dark almost instantly.
 2. Add the shallots, and stir to coat with the fragrant oil. Sweat them, covered, over medium low heat for about five minutes, stirring after 2 minutes. Add the garlic and a good pinch of salt and cook, uncovered, for about thirty seconds, stirring.
 3. Turn the heat up to medium and add the rice, stirring constantly to mix it thoroughly with the aromatics and oil.
 4. Add the wine (and take a sip of the glass you poured for yourself). Let it cook down for a minute or so, and then add about one half cup of the stock, stirring constantly. Once the stock is mostly absorbed, add another half cup or so of stock, stirring all the while. Continue to do this (adding more stock once most but not all of the stock you just added has been absorbed) until you have used about 3 cups of the stock. Test a grain of rice. Is it firm but tender? If not, add more stock, one half cup at a time, and continue to stir.
 5. When the rice is al dente, add the cooked whole oats and their cooking liquid and cook for about 30 seconds, to heat them through. (If you made the oats well in advance, and they are cold, you will need a few minutes to warm them up.) Stir in the lemon juice and zest, as well as the almonds, and give it a good stir. Test for salt and correct (and add pepper, if you like). Add the parsley and gently toss.
 6. Serve immediately. Enjoy!! ;o)

7. ** I make a quick vegetable stock for this using the green tops of 2 leeks, a small carrot, a stalk of celery and the stems from the parsley chopped for this dish, covering with about 6 cups of water and simmering for 30 to 40 minutes.
8. To make oat groats, cover with at least two inches of cold water and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down and simmer for about ten minutes. Add about a cup of water, bring it back up to the boil, and then turn off the heat. Cover and let sit for at least 2 hours. Four to six hours, or overnight, is even better. Remove the lid, bring to a boil and simmer for another 20 to 30 minutes, until soft but still chewy. You can also cook them on the stove for 45 minutes to an hour, adding water as necessary to keep the oats covered, if you prefer. Let them sit for at least fifteen minutes before using. ;o)