

Go with the grain

Carnaroli rice is one of the great Superfino varieties (meaning that it has a slightly elongated grain), also known as 'the King of Rice' or 'the caviar of rice'. For Italians it is their rice of choice for making risotto, differing from the more common arborio rice due to its higher starch content and firmer texture. Its round grains absorb more cooking liquid than other types of rice so it is perfect for making that creamy risotto while being much more difficult to overcook. Carnaroli is a relatively recent invention, emerging just after the Second World War when an Italian rice grower crossed arborio with a Japanese variety, making this wonderful new strain of rice.

RISOTTO AI FUNGHI PORCINI E PANCETTA AFFUMICATA



50g dried porcini mushrooms
150g smoked pancetta, cut into small cubes
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
150g chestnut mushrooms, sliced
400g carnaroli rice
approximately 1.8 litres hot vegetable stock
1 tbsp flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
100g butter
100g grated Parmigiano Reggiano

Put the dried porcini in a bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave to soak for about 15 minutes. Drain the mushrooms, keeping all but the last dregs of the water. Roughly chop the porcini mushrooms.

Heat a non-stick pan on the hob and add the cubed pancetta. Fry for a few minutes until crispy. There's no need to add any oil to the pan as the pancetta will cook in its own fat. Take a heavy-bottomed pan and heat the extra virgin olive oil along with the onion and garlic and gently cook over a low heat for a few minutes. Add the chestnut and porcini mushrooms and cook for another few minutes.

Add the rice to the pan and stir until all the grains are coated in fat. Start adding the stock a ladleful or two at a time, stirring the rice until it has absorbed the liquid before adding any more. You can add the left over water from the porcini mushrooms at this stage. Season with salt and pepper. After about 10 minutes, stir through the crispy pancetta. The risotto is ready when the rice is soft, but still al dente. This should take about 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the butter, grated parmesan and chopped parsley. Serve immediately.





porcini
and smoked pancetta
risotto