

Thyme Roasted Apple & Butternut Squash Risotto

By Oat&Sesame

Every year we take an apple vacation. No, not to the Apple store. We head to the Hudson Valley in New York and drive north to Vermont picking and surveying the endless varieties of heritage apples available this time of year. I have yet to meet an apple (or apple cider donut) that I didn't like. Just like donuts, risotto is comfort food. Creamy risotto topped with thyme roasted butternut squash and roasted apples laced with cinnamon sugar - and last but not least bacon. Happy fall!

Serves 4

- Risotto
 - 1.5 cups arborio rice
 - 1 quart chicken stock, preferably good quality and not low sodium
 - 1/2 cup white wine
 - 1 medium shallot, finely diced
 - 2 tablespoons butter
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, grated
 - The Toppings
 - 6 slices thick cut bacon, cooked and diced
 - 1 medium butternut squash, peeled and cubed
 - 1 large tart apple, diced
 - 2 sprigs thyme, chopped
 - salt and pepper, to taste
 - sugar and cinnamon, to taste
1. Prepare the bacon on stove top or using the oven method. Cook until crisp and the crumble or chop into bite sized pieces.
 2. Heat oven to 400F. Prep and chop the squash & apple. On separate rimmed baking sheets, toss with a few dashes of olive oil. Toss the squash with half the thyme, salt and pepper. Toss the apples with a few dashes of sugar and cinnamon and the rest of the thyme. Roast both until tender - squash about 20-25 min, apples about 10-15 min.
 3. Risotto Process:
 4. Heat the stock to a simmer in a medium saucepan, then lower the heat to keep it warm.
 5. In a large saucepan, heat the oil and 1 Tbsp of the butter over medium heat. When the butter melts, add the chopped shallot. Sauté for 2-3 minutes or until it is slightly translucent.
 6. Add the rice to the pot and stir with a wooden spoon so that the melted oil and butter coat the grains of rice. Sauté for another minute - the rice will start to smell a bit nutty, but should not turn brown.
 7. Add the wine and continue to stir until the liquid is fully absorbed.
 8. Add 1 ladle of hot chicken stock to the rice and stir until the liquid is fully absorbed. Be patient with this process. When the rice appears almost dry, add another ladle of stock. Slowly and patiently repeat this process stirring constantly. The rice will begin to look creamy. The process will take about 20-30 min. Check the rice to see if it's just tender - overcooking it will make it stir into mush!
 9. If you run out of stock and the risotto still isn't done, you can finish the cooking using hot water.

10. Stir in the remaining 1 Tbsp butter and the parmesan cheese. Season with additional salt and pepper if needed.