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KITCHEN KNEADS

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Butternut Squash Risotto with Crispy Sage and Pine Nuts

Serves 6

Creamy, and satisfying, this saffron and butternut squash risotto is topped off with crispy sage leaves and pine nuts creating a bowl that captures the essence of autumn flavors! The key to the extra richness found in this is in pureeing half of the roasted butternut squash. The garnishes of crispy sage leaves and pine nuts punctuate the earthy flavors of the butternut squash and are best not left out.

Ingredients:

1 butternut squash, diced into 3/8" cubes
1 onion, finely diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
4 tablespoons butter, divided
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
2 cups arborio rice
1 cup dry white wine
4-5 cups chicken broth
1/2 teaspoon of saffron, or about 8 threads
1/2 cup parmesan cheese, grated
Kosher salt and pepper to taste

Garnish:

1-2 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted
1 bunch sage leaves, crisped in 2 tablespoons of butter

To toast the pine nuts: Using a dry skillet, heat over medium heat. Add the pine nuts. Tossing frequently, allow the pine nuts to roast until they begin to turn a golden brown.

To make the crispy sage leaves: Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a small sauté pan; add whole sage leaves. Allow the leaves to become crisp by frying for about 2 minutes on each side, delicately turning the leaves with tongs once during the process. Remove the crispy sage from the butter and set aside until time to garnish the finished risotto.

Risotto Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F. Place the diced butternut squash in a single layer on a large roasting pan. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Sprinkle the squash with salt and pepper and roast for about 20-25 minutes or until tender to a knife tip. Stir and toss the squash halfway through the roasting process. Remove half of the squash and puree. Reserve the other half as cubes to be added to the finished risotto.

2. In a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat, sauté the onions and garlic in a blend of 2 tablespoons of butter and 2 tablespoons of olive oil until translucent. Add the rice and stir until coated. Then, add the wine and continue to stir until it is absorbed.

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3. Meanwhile, in a separate soup pot, bring the broth to a simmer and separate one cup of broth into a separate bowl. Add the saffron to the reserved broth to infuse. Set aside.
4. Once the wine is absorbed into the rice, slowly add 1-2 ladles of broth to the pot of rice, starting with the saffron-infused broth; bring to a low simmer. Keep simmering and slowly add ladles of broth (one ladle at a time). Stir continuously, until the broth becomes absorbed.
5. Add the salt and pepper while stirring and adding the broth. Taste test the risotto often to ensure adequate salt and pepper according to your taste. When the risotto is al dente, add 1 more ladle of the stock, stir, and turn the heat to low.
6. Add the roasted, pureed squash and stir. Then, add the cubes of roasted squash. For a silky finish, stir in 2 tablespoons of butter and 1/2 cup of parmesan cheese.
7. Serve hot. Garnish with toasted pine nuts and crispy sage.