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# A festive take on risotto dish

## Associated PRESS

Even though risotto is a simple rice dish, I associate it with special occasions.

The key to risotto is setting up two pots, one for the chicken stock and the other for making the risotto itself. Keep the chicken stock warm so that it is absorbed quicker and doesn't "shock" the risotto as you stir it in, little by little.

## CHAMPAGNE RISOTTO

Servings: 2 dinner portions or 4 side dishes  
Start to finish: 45 minutes

- 2 large shallots, chopped (about 1/3 cup)
- 2 large cloves of garlic, chopped
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 tablespoons butter, divided
- 4 ounces mixed chopped mushrooms (A generous cup of cooked mushrooms)
- 1 cup Champagne
- 32 ounces unsalted chicken stock
- 6 sprigs of fresh thyme, divided
- 1 generous cup Arborio rice

1 generous cup Parmesan Cheese, grated

In a heavy-bottomed medium-size pot over medium-high heat, add olive oil and 2 tablespoons of butter. Immediately add shallot and garlic and stir for 3-4 minutes, or until the shallot is translucent and beginning to brown around the edges.

Add rice to the shallots and garlic and stir vigorously for about 30 seconds until all of the rice grains are coated in oil. Let rice toast in the pan for about 3 minutes, stirring frequently.

In a medium saute pan, add the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and let melt. Season butter with salt and add mushrooms. Let cook down until lightly sauteed and set aside.

In a second pot, warm chicken stock and 1/2 cup of Champagne over medium-low heat. Add 4 sprigs of thyme to infuse the stock.

Add Champagne to the rice mixture and reduce heat to medium. Add in the sauteed mushrooms. Stir for 2 to 3 minutes, until most of the liquid is absorbed.

Use a ladle to add 1/2 cup of the hot chicken stock to the rice. Stir frequently. Each time the stock is almost fully absorbed, add another 1/2 cup. Continue stirring and adding stock until rice is creamy yet still a little firm to the bite. (It may not be necessary to use all of the stock.) The total cooking time, once the rice has been added, should not be more than about 25 minutes. To keep the rice slightly creamy, don't wait until the last ladle full of stock is totally absorbed before pulling it off the heat and serving.

Remove from the heat. Stir in the reserved thyme (leaves only) and the Parmesan cheese. Continue stirring until the cheese is completely melted. Season with a touch of white pepper and salt if desired. Serve in flat bowls with a sprig of thyme.

Nutrition information per serving: 343 calories; 174 calories from fat; 19 g fat (8 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 37 mg cholesterol; 475 mg sodium; 31 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 4 g sugar; 12 g protein.

# Dining



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