

rialto

RESTAURANT + BAR

Spring Green risotto

Jody Adams/Rialto

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¼ pound asparagus spears
Kosher salt
1 cup fresh peas
3 cups chicken stock
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 medium onion, cut into ¼-inch dice, 1 cup
Freshly ground black pepper
1 head escarole, thoroughly washed and cut into ½ inch ribbons
1 stalk celery, peeled and cut into ¼ inch dice, including leaves
1½ cups Arborio rice
½ cup dry white vermouth
½ teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
1 teaspoon chopped fresh summer savory or mint
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan

Rinse asparagus. Snap off the bottom third. Using a vegetable peeler, peel the stalks, to within 1 inch of the tip. Reserve stalk ends and peelings. Cut the peeled asparagus on the diagonal into ½ inch slices.

Bring 2 cups salted water to a boil. Add the diagonally cut asparagus pieces and peas and blanch 2 minutes. Scoop out the vegetables with a slotted spoon and transfer immediately to ice water. Drain and dry.

Add the asparagus stalk ends and peelings to the boiling water reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer 15 minutes. Strain the flavored water into a clean pot. Add the stock and keep warm over low heat.

Melt the butter in a risotto pan or a large, deep-sided saucepan over medium heat. It's important to use a pan with a heavy bottom that conducts heat evenly; otherwise the rice will burn when you're cooking the risotto. Add the onion, season with salt and pepper and cook until they are tender, about 5 minutes. Add the escarole and celery and cook 3 minutes.

Add the rice and cook 5 minutes, stirring so the fat coats all the rice. Season with salt and pepper.

Add the vermouth and cook, stirring frequently, until most of it has been absorbed. Add the stock, ½ cup at a time, stirring frequently, making sure that nothing sticks to the bottom of the pan. If you find that the stock is absorbed instantly, or you have to stir violently to prevent the rice from sticking and burning, and then lower the heat. Wait until most of the stock has been absorbed before adding the next half-cup. Continue adding the stock ½ cup at a time. Stop adding stock when the rice is creamy and tender, but there's still a slight amount of resistance as you bite into it. Don't worry if there's still chicken stock left—you may not have to use it all. The total cooking time for the rice is about 30 minutes.

As soon as the rice is finished stir the asparagus and peas. Season with salt and pepper. The texture should be creamy and slightly runny. Stir in the lemon zest, herbs and three quarters of the cheese. Add ¼ cup stock or water (if you've run out of stock) just before serving. Spoon into warmed large shallow bowls or use warmed plates and serve the remaining cheese on the side.