

Cherry-Tomato Confit and Grated Zucchini Risotto

For the Rice:

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2½ cups Arborio rice
½ cup dry white wine or vermouth
6 cups or more chicken stock
1 minced onion
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
½ cup grated Parmigiano, plus extra
Salt and pepper to taste

For the Cherry-Tomato Confit

1 quart ripe cherry or grape tomatoes
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
4 crushed garlic cloves
¼ teaspoon hot chili-pepper flakes
1-2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon each fresh thyme and oregano

For the Grated Zucchini:

2 firm zucchini
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Wash and grate the zucchini on the large holes into a colander set over a large bowl. The bowl will capture any draining juices. Sprinkle the sea salt over the zucchini in the colander and mix. Let the squash drain for at least 10 minutes. Gather the squash in paper towels and squeeze out as much liquid as possible into the bowl. Sauté for 1-2 minutes in the olive oil until barely tender and set aside.

Wash and halve the cherry or grape tomatoes and place in a baking dish. Mix in the olive oil, lemon zest, crushed garlic cloves, chili-pepper flakes, and the sea salt. Bake at 300° for about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes begin to caramelize. Add herbs for the last 10 minutes. Remove the garlic cloves and set aside.

Bring the stock and the zucchini liquid to a simmer in a saucepan, keeping it simmering throughout the rice-cooking process. In a heavy Dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Cook the onions until golden and tender, stirring frequently. Add the rice, and stir to coat and toast until the grains begin to become translucent, about 2 minutes.

Stir in the wine and continue stirring until it has evaporated. Add ½ cup of the simmering broth, plus ½ teaspoon of sea salt, and stir until the stock has evaporated. Continue adding the stock in ½ cup portions, stirring each time until the liquid has evaporated. If the rice begins to stick to the pot, immediately add more broth. Adjust heat so the rice is gently simmering. Continue until all the stock has been incorporated. If the rice is still not tender, you may need to add extra broth or water, which must be simmering before being added. The rice should be done—that is creamy, but not mushy—in 30-35 minutes.

Lower the heat. Gently stir in the grated zucchini and the tomato confit, and cook for a minute or two until heated. Remove the casserole from the heat and stir in the tablespoon of butter and the grated cheese. Add fresh-ground pepper and more salt to taste.

Decorate with fresh basil leaves. Serve with extra Parmigiano at the table.