



Olive Risotto with Basil

Michele Anna Jordan

Serves 4

In this risotto, dark, sensual olives are softened by both rice and cheese; fresh tomato concassé adds high notes. Because I like red wine with this risotto I add a small amount of the wine I'll be serving—usually a light-bodied pinot noir—to the risotto itself, which adds a layer of flavor that helps deepen the pairing. When tomatoes are not in season, I either use frozen tomatoes from last summer or I omit the concassé. Do not use out of season or canned tomatoes.

Tomato Concassé (recipe follows)

2 thyme sprigs

4 to 6 cups vegetable broth, hot

1/4 cup olive oil

3 shallots, minced

4 garlic cloves, minced

1 1/2 cups Carnaroli rice

Kosher salt

Black pepper in a mill

1/2 cup medium-bodied red wine

8 oz pitted olives (a mix of Kalamata, Niçoise, California black, and oil-cured), minced

3/4 cup (about 3 oz) grated Dry Jack or Parmigiano cheese

2 Tbsp minced fresh basil

2 Tbsp minced fresh Italian parsley

Fresh basil sprigs, for garnish

Make the tomato concassé and set aside. Add the thyme sprigs to the stock and keep warm over low heat.

Heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan set over medium-low heat. Add the shallots and sauté until soft and fragrant, about 6 to 7 minutes. Add garlic and sauté two minutes more. Increase the heat to medium. Add the rice and stir with a wooden spoon until each grain begins to turn milky white, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the wine and stir until it is completely absorbed. Add the stock 1/2 cup at a time, stirring after each addition until the liquid is nearly absorbed. Continue to add stock and stir until the rice is almost tender, about 15 minutes. Stir in the olives and the cheese and continue adding stock and stirring until the rice is tender, about 3 to 5 minutes more. Add the minced basil and parsley and remove from the heat. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Divide among individual soup plates, spoon a little of the concassé over each portion, garnish with fresh herb sprigs, and serve immediately.