

BAKED RICE with ROASTED MUSHROOMS & SWEET POTATOES

(Oven-baked Risotto)

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Welcome fall with this creamy, flavorful take on risotto that presents a high “comfort food” factor for this season and beyond.

Traditional risotto is prepared stovetop using a method of repeatedly stirring in small amounts of hot stock until absorbed. That slow cooking process allows the rice to gently soften and release starches that help create a creamy texture. This recipe provides another option - letting the oven do most of the work.

Brown basmati rice is used in place of the traditional white Arborio rice as a way to increase the nutrient factor. Brown Arborio rice could be used but is less commonly found in grocery stores. Brain and health-boosting mushrooms, sweet potatoes and walnuts are also included. Finish it off with a dollop of [fresh pesto](#) for a very complimentary burst of fresh herb flavor.

As with any rice dish, this recipe is creamiest if served immediately after cooking. As it cools, the liquid continues to absorb into the rice and the dish thickens. To revive the delicious leftovers, simply add a splash of stock.

Makes: 4 - 5 servings

INGREDIENTS:

Roasted Mushrooms and Sweet Potatoes

- 8 ounces sliced Cremini (or Baby Bella) mushrooms
- 2 cups diced sweet potato, not peeled
- 2 tablespoons avocado oil, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

Baked Rice

- 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, small dice
- 1 - 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 cup brown basmati rice, or brown Arborio rice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 cups vegetable broth, no added salt
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves (or 2 - 3 sprigs of fresh thyme)
- 1/3 cup half & half or oat milk
- 1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese or vegan cheese
- 1/4 - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
- fresh pesto - for garnish (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Roast the Mushrooms and Sweet Potato:

1. Preheat oven to 450° F. Line a baking sheet with foil, parchment or a silicone sheet. Place the mushrooms and sweet potatoes separately on the baking sheet, tossing each with 1 tablespoon avocado oil. Season lightly with salt and black pepper.
2. Place the baking sheet into the preheated oven. Roast for 10 - 15 minutes, until sweet potatoes are soft yet hold their shape and mushrooms are lightly browned. Remove from the oven and transfer the mushrooms and sweet potatoes to a bowl or plate until ready to use.
3. LOWER THE OVEN TEMPERATURE TO 350° F.

Make the Baked Rice:

4. While the mushrooms and sweet potatoes are roasting, prep the other ingredients for the baked rice.
5. In a Dutch oven or heavy ovenproof skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until soft, translucent and nicely browned, approximately 4 – 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook briefly, 30 seconds or until fragrant.
6. Add the rice, stirring to coat with the oil and onion mixture. Toast the rice grains, stirring occasionally for 1 – 2 minutes.
7. Add the wine, allowing it to simmer until the wine has almost all evaporated.
8. Add the stock and thyme, stir and bring to a gentle simmer. Cover the pot, turn off the heat, and transfer the pan to the oven. Bake at 350° F for 30 – 33 minutes, until rice is tender and liquid is almost all absorbed.
9. Remove pan from the oven. If using fresh thyme sprigs, remove the stems at this time. Stir in the half & half (or oat milk) and cheese. Add the roasted mushrooms and sweet potatoes, stirring gently to evenly distribute. Taste, and add additional salt if needed.
10. Sprinkle the chopped walnuts over the top and serve immediately with pesto on the side for garnishing individual servings, if using.

NOTES:

- *The amount of salt required in the recipe will vary depending on the saltiness of the stock and the cheese.*
- *The amount of liquid can vary by the brand of rice used. If the rice is dry and not fully cooked after baking for 30 minutes, add approximately 1/4 – 1/2 cup more stock and continue to cook another 10 or so minutes, until rice is tender. Try to avoid overcooking where the grains begin to fall apart.*
- *The base recipe is versatile and can be changed up with any seasonal ingredients such as asparagus and spinach in the spring, or zucchini and sweet corn in the summer.*