

## Mushroom Risotto

Even without the addition of traditional oil, butter, cheese, and salt, risotto can be very satisfying and delicious. This classic Italian rice dish is creamy and hearty, getting its big flavor from a variety of mushrooms, as well as garlic, balsamic vinegar, and fresh tarragon.

7 cups water  
1 cup chopped shallots, leeks, or yellow or white onion  
½ pound white or cremini mushrooms (about 5 medium-large), sliced  
¼ pound portabella mushroom (1 medium), sliced into small pieces  
¼ pound shiitake mushrooms (about 6 medium), sliced  
1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic (4 to 5 medium cloves)  
1 teaspoon granulated onion  
¼ cup balsamic vinegar  
1½ cups dry/uncooked Arborio rice  
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh tarragon, plus a little more for garnish  
1 teaspoon lemon zest (optional)  
¼ cup raw, unsalted cashews (or other nut), ground as a garnish (optional)

1. Bring the 7 cups of water to a low boil in a medium saucepan, over medium heat. Reduce the heat so the water is steaming but not boiling. Leave on the stovetop.
2. On a separate burner, heat 1 tablespoon of water in a 4- to 5-quart, heavy-duty saucepan over medium-low heat. When the water starts to sputter, add the shallots (or leeks or onion), and cook, stirring, until soft, 3 to 5 minutes, adding a little water as needed to prevent sticking.
3. Add all of the mushrooms and garlic, and continue stirring for about 3 minutes (adding a little water as needed). Add the rice, and stir until the edges are translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the balsamic vinegar, and stir until you can no longer see any vinegar in the bottom of the pot.
4. Pour in 1 cup of the hot water, stirring until it has been almost completely absorbed (2 to 3 minutes). Continue to add 1 cup of water at a time, stirring nearly continuously. This gradual technique is the key to getting the rice to release its starch, thereby making the dish creamy. This process will take 30 to 40 minutes and will use 6 to 7 cups of the hot water. The risotto is ready when the rice is soft but still has a bit of chew to it.
5. Stir in the tarragon and lemon zest (if using). If desired, garnish with chopped tarragon and/or raw, unsalted cashews (or other nut), ground using a rotary cheese grater; this gives the effect of parmesan cheese. Serve immediately. When reheating leftovers, stir in a little water or unsweetened nondairy milk, as the risotto will have thickened considerably.

Preparation: about 20 minutes

Cooking: 45 minutes

Serves: 4 to 6 (makes about 6 cups)

## Beef-less Stew

This hearty stew has everything you love about beef stew, but without the beef! It has large chunks of potato, carrot, celery, and onion, and portabella mushrooms stand in for the beef. Garlic, paprika, and fresh rosemary provide excellent flavor.

1½ large yellow or white onions, chopped into large pieces

3 ribs celery, chopped into ½-inch pieces

3 medium carrots, sliced lengthwise and cut into ½-inch pieces

2 portabella mushrooms (about ½ pound), cut into 1-inch pieces

1½ tablespoon finely chopped garlic (5 to 6 cloves)

5 cups water

¼ cup tomato paste

2 pounds potatoes (about 3 large Yukon Gold), peeled or unpeeled, cut into 1-inch chunks

1 tablespoon dried Italian herbs

1 tablespoon paprika

2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary

1½ cups green peas (frozen or fresh)

½ cup parsley leaves, chopped

Ground black pepper to taste

1. Heat a large soup pot on high heat with 1 tablespoon of water. When the water begins to sputter, add the onion, celery, and carrot, and cook for 7 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally and adding a little water as needed to prevent sticking.
2. Stir in the mushrooms and garlic, and continue cooking while stirring for an additional 5 minutes, adding water as needed.
3. Add the 5 cups of water, tomato paste, potatoes, dried Italian herbs, and paprika. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a low boil. Add the rosemary and cook covered for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the peas, and cook for 5 minutes more, or until the carrots and potatoes are tender.
4. Place 2 cups of the stew into a blender and blend under very smooth. Stir this into the pot to thicken the stew, and stir in the parsley.

Preparation: about 30 minutes

Cooking: 35 minutes

Serves: 6 to 8 (makes about 10 cups of stew)

## Tu-no Casserole

This hearty casserole calls for garbanzo beans instead of tuna—a surprising but wonderful substitution—and sliced mushrooms instead of the traditional can of salt-heavy (and dairy-laden) Cream of Mushroom soup.

### For the casserole:

1½ cups dry/uncooked elbow macaroni or small-shell pasta  
1 medium yellow or white onion, chopped  
8 medium cremini or white mushrooms, halved then sliced  
2 cups cooked green peas (rinse and thaw first if frozen)  
2 cans cooked garbanzo beans (15 ounces each; about 3 cups), drained and rinsed

### For the sauce:

2½ cups unsweetened nondairy milk  
2½ ounces raw, unsalted cashews (about ½ cup)  
2 teaspoons granulated onion  
½ teaspoon granulated garlic  
½ teaspoon ground white pepper  
3 to 4 teaspoons kelp granules or kelp powder (for a seafood flavor; optional)

1. Place all of the sauce ingredients (nondairy milk, cashews, granulated onion, pepper, and kelp, if using) into a blender and set aside (so the cashews can soften).
2. Cook the pasta according to the package instructions. Drain and rinse with cool water, return the pasta to the pot, and set aside. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon of water in a frying pan over medium-high heat. When the water starts to sputter, add the onion and mushrooms. Cook, stirring, for 3 to 5 minutes, until the onions have softened and are lightly browned, adding a little water as needed to prevent sticking. Add this and the peas to the pot of cooked pasta.
4. Place the garbanzo beans into a food processor, and pulse just until the beans are broken up but not mushy, or use a handheld bean masher. Add this to the soup pot.
5. Blend the sauce ingredients until smooth, and stir into the pot. (The mixture may be soupy, but it will firm up during cooking.)
6. Spoon into a 9×13-inch baking dish, and bake, uncovered, for 35 to 40 minutes, until the top is lightly browned. Cool for at least 5 minutes before serving.

Preparation: about 30 minutes

Cooking: 12 minutes (stovetop), 40 minutes (oven)

Serves: 8 to 12 (makes about 7½ cups)

### Notes

- **For a lower-fat/nut-free casserole**, substitute 1 can cooked and drained cannellini beans (15 ounces; about 1½ cups) for the ½ cup cashews.

## Curried Sweet Potato Salad

This is not your traditional potato salad: It's distinctive, daring, and delectable, not to mention really pretty—one of my favorite recipes!

### For the salad:

2 pounds sweet potatoes (about 3 medium), peeled, and cut into  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces  
2 cups coarsely chopped fresh spinach leaves  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup raisins  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sliced almonds (plus extra for garnish)  
2 ribs celery, chopped  
4 green onions, white and green parts, thinly sliced

### For the dressing:

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup water  
2½ ounces raw, unsalted cashews (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup orange juice  
1 teaspoon curry powder  
1 clove garlic, finely chopped  
1 teaspoon orange zest

1. Be sure to zest the orange first before juicing the orange for the dressing. Set the zest aside.
2. Place all of the dressing ingredients except the orange zest (water, cashews, orange juice, curry powder, and garlic) into a blender, and set aside for at least 15 minutes (so the cashews can soften).
3. Place the sweet potatoes into a soup pot with enough water to cover, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-high and cook until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a knife but not falling apart, about 10 to 15 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water and set aside.
4. Once the potatoes have thoroughly drained, place them into a large bowl, along with the spinach, raisins, almonds, celery, and green onions.
5. Blend the dressing ingredients until smooth. Stir the orange zest into the blended dressing with a fork (but don't blend it). Then stir the dressing into the salad. Serve warm or chilled as is, or topped with sliced almonds, if desired.

Preparation: about 30 minutes

Cooking: 10 minutes

Serves: 6 to 8 (makes about 1 cup dressing and 8½ cups salad)