

ZUCCHINI AND SPINACH RISOTTO

Serves 4 to 6

Yes, you *can* make risotto with a baby in the house! Here's a little secret: Risotto doesn't actually need to be attended to like, well, a baby, with you hovering over the stove, adding liquid in stages, and stirring, stirring, stirring. Heresy, perhaps, but wouldn't you rather eat a creamy, satisfying bowl of inauthentic risotto than yet another frozen pizza?

1 shallot or small onion, finely chopped	2 cups Arborio rice
2 garlic cloves, minced	4 to 5 cups low-sodium chicken broth, vegetable broth, water, or a combination
2 medium zucchini, shredded	1 cup white wine or vermouth
Half a 5-ounce bag of baby spinach, roughly chopped	2 tablespoons chopped basil
2 tablespoons olive oil	1 tablespoon butter
Salt	1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

STAGE 1 (10 minutes)

1. Prepare the shallot, garlic, zucchini, and spinach.
2. Put each in a separate bowl, cover, and refrigerate.

STAGE 2 (15 minutes)

1. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. When it shimmers, add the shallot and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, about 3 minutes.
2. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds, then add the zucchini and a pinch of salt. Cook, stirring frequently, until zucchini has released most of its liquid and almost all liquid has evaporated, 8 to 10 minutes.
3. If it will be more than two hours before you cook again, cover pan and refrigerate. If not, it's OK to keep at room temperature, covered.

STAGE 3 (25 to 30 minutes)

1. Heat the broth or water until nearly boiling (I usually do this in the microwave).
2. Return pan with the zucchini mixture to the stove, and heat over low heat. If mixture looks dry, add a glug of olive oil.
3. When mixture is heated through, raise heat to medium and add the rice. Cook, stirring frequently, until each grain is coated with oil and rice begins to make a clacking sound.
4. Add the wine and cook, stirring frequently, until most of the liquid has been absorbed, 3 to 5 minutes. Add 4 cups of the broth or water all at once, and bring to a boil. If you're using plain water, add ½ teaspoon salt; if using broth, don't salt at this point.
5. Lower the heat and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, until rice is almost tender, 15 to 17 minutes. Toward the end of this time, chop the basil (it will turn black if chopped too early). When the rice looks moist and creamy but not soupy, add the basil and the chopped spinach (a handful at a time) and stir until spinach is just cooked.
6. You want to maintain that creamy-not-soupy consistency, with rice that is just slightly firm in the center, so add some of the remaining broth or water if needed.
7. Remove from heat, stir in the butter and Parmesan, and season with salt if desired.

MAKE BABY FOOD: Texturally this one's ideal, just as it is. There is alcohol in the recipe but most of it will have cooked off. I did feed this to Harry when he was a baby, but that's a decision each family must make on its own.

MAMA SAID

"We *love* this recipe and have already made it twice. It's pretty easy to put together and amenable to a number of different things. The second time around we added the zucchini and then raided our fridge for other veggies to add—mushrooms and chard worked really well. It's a great side and a filling dinner all by itself. Our four-year-old loved it and I can easily see the baby eating this soon too." —Alexandra S., mom of two, Baltimore, MD