

Idiot's Kitchen Recipe – Butternut Squash & Bacon Risotto

Recipe from idiotskitchen.com – Adapted from the New York Times



Ingredients:

1 butternut squash, 2½ - 3 pounds, peeled and diced
6 slices thick cut bacon, divided
1 cup finely chopped onion
½ teaspoon rubbed (dried) sage
2 Tablespoons fresh sage, divided 1 Tablespoon slivered, 1 Tablespoon finely chopped
1½ cups Arborio rice
½ cup white wine (or dry white vermouth)
¾ cup Pecorino Romano cheese, shredded
Salt & Pepper

Use a vegetable peeler to remove the outer tan skin from a large butternut squash. Cut the squash in half vertically and use a large spoon to remove the seeds. Cut the halves into strips then dice into 1-inch cubes.

Place the cubes of squash in a large saucepan with 4 cups of water. Bring to a boil then simmer until the squash is tender but not falling apart, about 10 minutes. Drain the cooking water from the squash into a large bowl or another saucepan. **DO NOT DISCARD THE COOKING LIQUID.** Set half of the cooked squash cubes aside to add to the finished risotto.

Add the other half of the squash to a food processor or blender with 2 cups of the reserved cooking liquid. Process until smooth then pour the blended squash back into the pan with the remaining cooking liquid. Place on the stove over low heat until barely simmering. This is the cooking liquid for your risotto.

Place 3 strips of thick sliced bacon in a large pot or dutch oven over medium heat and cook until crispy. Remove the bacon from the pan and drain on a paper towel lined plate. Discard the bacon grease from these three strips.

Chop the remaining 3 strips of bacon and add them to the (now empty) pot over medium heat. Cook these bacon pieces until they are just beginning to color, about ¾ of the way done. Add 1 cup of finely chopped onion and 1 Tablespoon of finely chopped sage. Cook until the onion is tender but not browned, about 5 minutes.

Add ½ teaspoon of rubbed (dried) sage and stir to combine. **Note: If you are concerned about the sage flavor being too strong you can omit this until the end, taste the risotto, and add if desired.**

Add 1½ cups of Arborio rice and stir to coat the rice grains in the onion and bacon mixture. Add ½ cup of white wine and stir quickly until absorbed. Add the squash cooking liquid 1 ladleful at a time (about ¾ cup) and stir after each addition. The key to good risotto is to add the liquid slowly and stir constantly. Keep adding liquid and stirring until the liquid is almost gone – this takes about 20 minutes.

Taste a few grains of the risotto to see if it is tender. You want it slightly *al dente*, or tender with just the tiniest bit of bite in the center. If your liquid is gone and your risotto is still crunchy, add ¾-1 cup of water and stir as you did with the squash liquid.

When the risotto is tender and creamy, gently fold in the reserved squash cubes and ¾ cup of grated pecorino romano cheese. Season with freshly cracked black pepper. Taste and adjust the seasoning of salt, pepper, and sage as needed.

Spoon into bowls and garnish with crumbled bacon and slivered fresh sage.

Serves 4.