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Risotto Primavera

This recipe is courtesy of Chef Ian Harrison from Carnegies Restaurant in Greenfield, Indiana. The creamy risotto is enhanced with saffron and filled with an abundance of tender spring vegetables.

3 tablespoons olive oil
4 1/2 cups (or more) low-salt chicken broth (prefer homemade)
1 large white onion, finely chopped
1 3/4 cups (11 1/2 ounces) Arborio rice or medium-grain white rice
3/4 cup dry white wine
Pinch of saffron
8 baby carrots, peeled, tops trimmed to 1/2 inch
1 bunch asparagus spears, trimmed, cut on diagonal into 1-inch pieces
1 c. fresh fava beans (can substitute peas or any other fresh bean)
1 bunch spinach, washed and de-stemmed
1 1/3 cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese (about 4 ounces)
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter, cut into 1-inch pieces
1/2 cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves
1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
Additional freshly grated Parmesan cheese

- Bring broth to simmer in medium saucepan over low heat. Cover and keep warm.
- Heat 3 tablespoons oil in heavy large pot over medium-high heat.
- Add onion. Sauté until onion begins to soften, about 2 minutes.
- Add rice; stir until rice is translucent at edges but still opaque in center, about 3 minutes.
- Add wine and saffron and simmer until absorbed, stirring occasionally, about 3 minutes.
- Add 1 cup warm broth and baby carrots. Simmer until broth is almost absorbed, stirring often, about 4 minutes.
- Add 2 cups more broth, 1 cup at a time, allowing each addition to be absorbed before adding next and stirring frequently, about 10 minutes.
- Mix in remaining vegetables and 1 cup broth.
- Simmer until broth is just absorbed, stirring often, about 5 minutes.
- Add 1 1/3 cups cheese, butter, and 1/2 cup broth.
- Simmer until butter melts, rice and vegetables are just tender, and risotto is creamy, stirring often and adding more broth by 1/4 cupfuls if risotto is dry, about 3 minutes longer.
- Mix in basil; season with salt and pepper.

- Transfer risotto to large shallow bowl.
- Sprinkle with pine nuts.
- Serve immediately, passing additional cheese separately.

Cook's note: Feel free to substitute any other spring offerings for the vegetables such as fiddlehead ferns, beets, morels, etc.

Serves 6-8 as a first course or 4 as an entree