

# Saffron and Morel Risotto

*From The-Stupids.com*

We think this is one of the best damned risotto dishes we've ever had. It's very rich. Serves four as a first course.

1 small yellow onion, diced fairly fine  
1 cup Arborio rice  
2-3 tbsp of good olive oil  
1/2 cup white wine  
5 cups vegetable stock  
1 big pinch of saffron  
1/2-1 oz of dried morels  
2 tbsp. fresh chopped Italian parsley, with extra for garnish  
1-2 tbsp butter, or high quality extra virgin olive oil (optional)  
1/4 cup freshly grated Reggiano parmesan, plus extra for garnishing  
Salt and pepper

Soak the morels in 1 cup of hot water until soft (~ 20 minutes). Squeeze the morels dry and cut in half lengthwise. Run them very well under running water. Strain the soaking liquid through a double layer of cheesecloth and a strainer, or through a coffee filter and set aside.

The stock needs to be in a separate pot on the stove at a strong simmer (A note on canned stocks, they can be awfully salty and can even impart a metallic taste to your dish. We usually cut it one to one with water). You'll need a ladle to add the stock with and a strong spoon to stir the risotto with. The pot for the risotto needs to be large (5 quart will work well) and as heavy as possible. An enameled Le Crueset pot works very well, as will most heavy stock pots.

Sweat the onions in the olive oil over medium high heat until translucent, about 5-8 minutes. Don't let them brown. Add the rice and morels and continue to stir for a couple of minutes.

At this point, add the wine and stir the rice. As the liquid is absorbed and the rice stops sticking to the side of the pot, add the reserved mushroom soaking water. At the same time, add the saffron. Continue stirring, adding stock as needed. As the rice gets closer to being done, the liquid will not absorb as quickly, so you will need to decrease the amount you put in each time. After 18-20 minutes, taste the rice for doneness. It should be al dente but not crunchy and not mushy. If it's not done, cook it a couple of minutes longer and test it again. If it's mushy, better luck next time.

At the point it reaches al dente, stir in the butter (optional), parsley, and parmesan, and adjust the seasoning. You won't need very much pepper, if any. The rice should be smooth and creamy without being soupy or clumpy. Serve it up and top it with the reserved cheese and a little more parsley.

If you've got some old red wines that have some mushroomy earthiness to them, this is the dish you want. We've had it with old bordeaux (St. Emilion to be exact) and found it to be a flawless match. An old cabernet or Meritage such as Joseph Phelps Insignia will also work well. We plan on giving it a spin with an old Rioja too.

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