

Primavera Risotto

- 12 asparagus spears, trimmed and chopped
- 100g unsalted butter
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 400g risotto rice (arborio or vialone nano if you can get it)
- 125ml dry white wine
- Salt and pepper

- Stock
 - 3 tablespoons olive oil, 4 onions diced if making your own
 - 2 good quality chicken stock cubes if not making your own stock (vegetable cubes are fine too, I find chicken tends to be tastier)

- Mantecatura (the beating in of butter and cheese which adds to consistency)
 - 75g cold unsalted butter, diced
 - 100g grated parmesan

If making your own stock, heat the olive oil in a pan and add the diced onions. Sweat until soft but not coloured. Add any other vegetable trimmings (woody ends of asparagus, pods etc), and add 2.5 litres of cold water. Bring to the boil and then simmer for 20 mins.

If using stock cubes, add these to 2.5 litres of boiling water and thoroughly dissolve.

As the stock is cooking, add 50g of butter to frying pan and slowly cook the chopped asparagus spears. Slowly cook on a relatively low heat until they are soft and almost breaking apart.

Move the stock to a back hob and start the risotto. Melt the other 50g of butter in a heavy based pan and add the finely chopped onion. Cook gently until translucent and soft. Add the rice and coat in the butter. Once the grains are warm to the touch, add the wine.

Once the wine has evaporated, start adding the stock ladle by ladle. Be sure to keep stirring and scraping the bottom and sides. Once each ladleful of stock has evaporated, add more stock.

After about 15 minutes, add the cooked, soft asparagus to the risotto. Carry on cooking until the rice is soft, but with a little bite - there should be no chalkiness in the centre of the grain. Be conservative with the stock at the end as you don't want too much liquid in the finished risotto.

Then it's time for the mantecatura - add the cold diced butter and beat into the risotto, followed by the parmesan, and then season to taste.