

Artichoke & Wild Mushroom Farro “Risotto”

Farro cooks quicker than rice, so the dish can come together in about 30 minutes if you power through the prep. Whole grain rice like brown and wild blends will need more cooking liquid and time to become tender. Roasted fresh artichokes make for a dazzling garnish fit for a soirée.

Ingredients

- 4 ounces of bulk Italian sausage, optional
- 1 pound of wild mushrooms, stems removed and roughly chopped
- 1 medium shallot, peeled, trimmed, and minced
- 1¾ cups (about 9 ounces) of farro or wild rice blend
- White wine or any light vinegar, optional
- 3 to 4 cups of water or vegetable broth, held warm in a pot
- 12 ounces (1 bag) of frozen artichoke hearts*
- Olive oil, for sautéing
- Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

Recommended Seasonings

- ¼ cup of shredded Pecorino or aged Italian cheese
- 1 lemon, both the zest and juice
- Fresh chives or basil, sliced thin
- 1 or 2 fresh artichokes, trimmed, peeled, quartered and roasted**

Method

1. **Warm the liquid and cook the sausage (if using).** Fill a large pot with a quart of water or vegetable stock. Then in a separate large pot or sauté pan with straight sides, cook the sausage over medium-high heat until it's brown and crispy, forcing it into small pieces with a wooden spoon. Add a little water if it sticks, and scrape it free with your spoon. Drain the sausage on a towel-lined plate and set it aside.
2. **Sauté the mushrooms in the pork drippings or olive oil** in a single layer. You might need to work in batches (don't remove, but pile the first batch to one side of the pot and add the rest). Once the mushrooms are dark and nearly crispy (taste one), add the shallots and cook for a minute or two while stirring. Add the farro or rice and stir one minute more.
3. **Pour in your wine or a quick splash of vinegar,** and simmer it away while scraping the bottom of the pot. Add the frozen artichoke hearts, a cup of water, and a pinch or two of salt (add jarred hearts once the farro is tender). I like to use a heatproof measuring cup or large ladle to transfer the hot water. **Cook, stirring often, adding more water a cup at a time when the last addition is almost gone. Begin tasting a bite to check for doneness after ten minutes. Aim for tender but chewy farro or rice. Break apart the artichoke hearts as they soften.**
4. **Taste and season the farro with salt and black pepper, and add lemon zest, cheese, and chopped herbs, if you like.** You can mix the cooked sausage into the farro or sprinkle a little on top of each serving with more chopped herbs and a squeeze of lemon juice.

Notes*

If using jarred or canned artichoke hearts, drain them before adding to the pot.

***To roast quartered artichokes, coat them in olive oil and season with salt. Lay each with a cut-side down on a lined sheet pan and roast at 425° F until mysteriously dark and very tender. Size will determine cooking time; after 25 minutes, begin checking the largest one by inserting a fork into the center and attempting to eat an outer leaf. Flip the quarters once or twice to caramelize all sides.*