

COURGETTE & ASPARAGUS RISOTTO WITH PINE NUTS, BASIL, MINT & LEMON

• SERVES 6

6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
450 g medium courgettes, thinly sliced
400 g fresh asparagus spears, tough stalks removed, cut into 2.5 cm lengths
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1.2 litres chicken or vegetable stock
400 g risotto rice (Arborio or Carnaroli)
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 tbsp finely sliced mint
1 tbsp finely sliced basil
50 g pine nuts, toasted
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Finely grated Parmesan, to serve

When testing this recipe, my sons agreed that courgette is actually very good! The secret is to sauté the vegetables until al dente, and no further, to retain their bright green colour and bite.

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and quickly sauté the courgettes, seasoned with salt and pepper, until just tender. Transfer to a bowl with a slotted spoon.

If needed, add another 1–2 tablespoons of olive oil to the pan, and sauté the asparagus until just tender. Add to the sautéed courgette and set aside.

Put the onion in the same pan, season with salt and pepper, and gently fry until it is soft but not coloured. Add the chopped garlic and fry for a further 30 seconds.

Meanwhile, heat the stock to a simmer in a separate, large pan and turn the heat to low.

Stir the rice into the onion mixture over a low heat until all the grains are coated and the rice becomes shiny and translucent.

Start to add the simmering stock, a ladleful at a time. Allow each ladle of stock to be absorbed before adding the next. Once all the stock has been added (this will take 20–30 minutes), test the rice. It should be tender with bite.

Stir in the lemon zest and juice, followed by the mint, basil and pine nuts.

Taste and adjust the seasoning, if needed, then stir the sautéed courgette and asparagus into the rice.

To serve, spoon into warm bowls and serve with freshly grated Parmesan.