



# OUT OF THE PANTRY

MATTHEW EVANS, FOOD EDITOR



## Pumpkin and meatball risotto

(Serves 4)

- 40g butter
- 1 large leek, rinsed, pale part finely chopped
- 200g good-quality pork sausages, meat squeezed out
- 200g pumpkin, peeled and finely diced
- 400g (2 cups) risotto rice, such as arborio
- 200ml decent-quality white wine
- 1.5 to 2 litres chicken stock, simmering
- 1 cup freshly grated parmesan

Heat the butter in a large, heavy-based saucepan over a modest flame and fry the leek until soft. Roll sausage meat into balls (about the size of a 5c coin). Add these to the pan with the leek to fry a bit. Stir in the pumpkin and rice and continue frying, stirring regularly, for about 2 minutes.

Slosh in the wine and turn up the heat; stir until the rice absorbs the wine. Start adding the stock, one ladleful at a time, stirring with a gentle figure-eight motion so the rice cooks evenly and releases some of the creamy starch that makes risotto so wonderful. Add a little salt and pepper and continue adding stock and stirring. The rice should be firm, but not too starchy.

When it's ready, throw in half the cheese, stir, then turn it off. Let it rest for 5 minutes. Season some more if necessary and serve with the rest of the cheese on the table.

## RICE, RICE BABY

**R**ISOTTO. It isn't a pilaf, which is baked and not stirred while it cooks. It isn't what you put under a big chunk of meat, at least not in Italy, where risotto was invented. And it isn't meant to be full of butter and cream.

Rather, it is a very flavoursome, wonderfully satisfying dish that either forms a whole meal on its own or is served with a small piece of meat or fish.

At its best it has a lovely creamy texture because it is stirred right throughout the cooking process.

Good risotto can be as simple as lemon and pecorino, or white wine and herbs. Most Italians think the

wine is indispensable (unlike the stock, which they're not so fussed about). They often use water, possibly with onion trimmings and a bay leaf thrown in. As a northern Italian dish it is sometimes stained a deep plum colour from red wine, sometimes heady with preserved pork like pancetta or speck, and often given the lift of whatever vegetables are in season or at hand.

Two visiting Italians to my farm cooked a superb risotto and I quickly grabbed the recipe to share with you. It takes 40 minutes to plate up and the sweetness of the pumpkin marries with the richness of the little sausage meatballs. I've been mesmerised by it ever since.

## Go nuts

They can't call it Granola (that's trademarked) and they don't want to call it muesli (too mundane). And Freestyle Granüesli from The Unexpected Guest is *far* from mundane. Yes, it's toasted, and rich and sweet, but the flavours are full and rich and round – and the ingredients are virtually all organic. Add natural yoghurt and fresh fruit for a magical way to start the day. [www.theunexpectedguest.com](http://www.theunexpectedguest.com)

