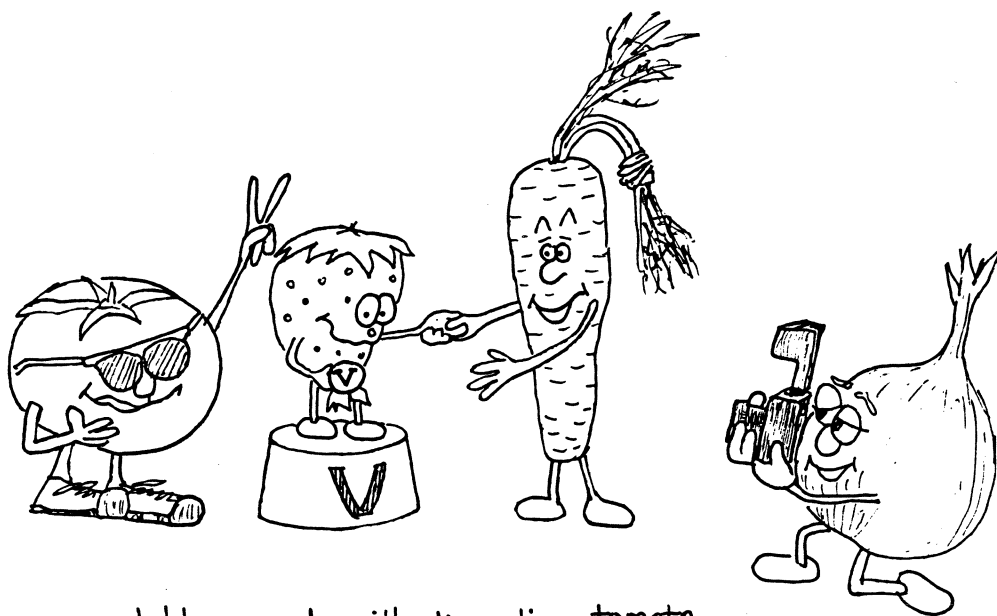


Strawberry Risotto?

Although we haven't quite been able to duplicate some of the superb risottos we've enjoyed in Italy, perhaps the best one we have done ourselves is strawberry risotto. Of course if you're anything like we used to be, your immediate reaction is "What? Strawberries in a rice dish that's not a dessert?" (Accompanied by skeptical facial expressions and possibly impolite body gestures.) This is the flip side of our original prejudice against vegetables in baked goods and warrants the same fate. Forget it! For the purposes of this recipe, the strawberry is an honorary vegetable.



honorary vegetable award, with dissenting tomato

We had had strawberry risotto several times in Italy before discovering a risotto cookbook in an independent bookstore in the yuppie section of Kansas City, MO. The first recipe we looked up was strawberry risotto and immediately bought the book upon finding it. Thus raising by several points our undoubtedly unwarranted East Coast opinion of life in that city.

Well, don't take our word for it. Try this one next time fresh strawberries come your way. They don't even have to be pretty looking. But if they're typical US supermarket berries, you'll want to core them to remove the hard white interiors. Apple corers won't work here unfortunately, unless your berries were harvested near a Department of Defense nuclear weapons power plant run by GE ("we bring good things to life..."). We usually quarter them lengthwise and then slice out the hard inner edge. No leafy parts please.

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| 1 | { | 2 Tablespoons unsalted butter | 2 | { | 1 cup rice (arborio if possible) |
| | | 1/4 cup finely minced onion | | | 3 1/2 cups simmering broth |
| | | 1/3 cup diced strawberries | | | (chicken, meat, vegetable or combo) |
| | | 1/6 cup Marsala wine (we prefer dry) or cognac | | | or |
| | | or | 3 | { | 1 Tablespoon unsalted butter (or some cream) |
| | | | | | 2 Tablespoons grated parmesan cheese (we prefer more) |

Okay, this is a standard risotto as discussed at length previously. Easy as 1-2-3. Sauté the onion in butter a couple minutes until it softens up, then add the strawberries and continue cooking until they relax into the mixture. Then add the Marsala and cook until the liquid is reduced to about a tablespoon (guess). Then add the rice and stir up thoroughly with wooden kitchen implement. Next add the simmering broth about 1/2 cup at a time until each is absorbed, for about 20 minutes cooking time. Save the last 1/4 cup broth to add with the butter and parmesan at the end and stir together. Stirring wouldn't hurt during the water suction phase either.

Serve (eat) immediately. Once you've tried it, you'll be convinced.