

Low-fat cooking: Spring risotto with peas and zucchini

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

With spring in the air, many "primavera" dishes will soon be popping up on restaurant menus, and it's a great time to add more fresh vegetables items to your home menu.

The zucchini and peas in this recipe give color, texture and garden-fresh taste to risotto, a dish that can be rich in flavor but here is also low in fat. Feel free to improvise with other vegetables if your market or, better yet, your garden offers more attractive options.

The recipe is featured in the April issue of *Everyday Food* from the *Kitchens of Martha Stewart Living*.

Spring Risotto with Peas and Zucchini

(Preparation and cooking time 1 hour)

- Two 14 1/2-oz cans chicken broth
 - 3 tablespoons butter
 - 1 to 2 lg zucchini (1 pound), cut 1/2-inch cubes
 - Salt and Ground pepper
 - 1/2 cup chopped onion
 - 1 1/2 cups Arborio rice
 - 1/2 cup dry white wine
 - 1 cup frozen peas, thawed
 - 1/2 cup grated Parmesan
- Heat broth and 2 1/2 cups water in a small saucepan over low heat; keep warm. Meanwhile, melt 2 tablespoons butter in a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add zucchini; season with

salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until zucchini is golden, 8 to 10 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer zucchini to a plate.

Reduce heat to medium-low. Add onion; cook until soft, 5 minutes. Season with 1 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Raise heat to medium. Add rice; cook, stirring, until translucent

around edges, about 3 minutes. Add wine; cook until absorbed, about 2 minutes.

Continue to cook, adding 1 cup hot broth at a time (stir until almost all liquid is absorbed before adding more), until rice is tender, 25 to 30 minutes total.

Add zucchini and peas; cook until peas are bright green, 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

Stir in remaining 1 tbs. butter and Parmesan. Serve, topped with more cheese.

Makes 6 servings.
Nutrition information per serving: about 347 cal., 10.7 g pro., 52.2

g carbo., 7.9 g total fat, 3.1 g fiber.

Recipe from the April issue of *Everyday Food* from the *Kitchens of Martha Stewart Living*.

Cranberry-pear chutney complements grills, roasts or snacks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chutney is a savory and versatile complement to a huge variety of dishes and edibles, year-round.

It's as good with grilled or roasted chicken, ham or pork, as with cold meat or cheese sandwiches. Make it ahead and keep ready for spur-of-the-moment snacks; or take a jar as a gift for someone, suggests cookbook author Diane Morgan, based in Portland, Ore., who developed the following recipe for a cranberry-pear chutney.

Cranberry Pear Chutney

(Preparation 25 minutes, cooking time 25 minutes)

- 4 cups fresh or frozen cranberries, picked over, and stemmed
- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 6 whole cloves
- 2 cinnamon sticks, each about 3 inches long
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 firm Bosc or Anjou pears, peeled, halved lengthwise, cored, and cut into 1/2-dice
- 1 sm yellow onion, diced
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1/3 cup diced crystallized ginger (see note)
- 1/2 cup whole hazelnuts, roasted, skins removed, and halved (see note)

In a deep 6-quart saucepan, combine the cranberries, sugar, 1 1/4 cups water, cloves, cinnamon and salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently to dissolve the sugar. Cook until the

cranberries begin to open, about 10 to 12 minutes. Adjust the heat so the mixture simmers. Stir in the pears, onion, raisins and ginger. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until thick, 10 to 15 minutes longer. Remove from the heat, stir in the hazelnuts, and allow the mixture to cool to room temperature. Discard the cinnamon sticks and cloves if you can find them. Refrigerate in tightly sealed jars for up to 3 months.

Makes about 2 quarts.
Note: Crystallized ginger slices are typically packaged in 4-ounce boxes and are available in the Asian foods section of well-stocked supermarkets.

Try to buy shelled hazelnuts (also known as filberts) with the skins removed. To roast, place the nuts on a rimmed baking sheet in a preheated 375 F oven. Roast for about 15 minutes, until lightly browned. If they have skins, when they cool enough to handle, lay them on a clean kitchen towel, or between several sheets of paper towels. Rub the nuts to remove most of the skins (they never completely come off). You can substitute unsalted cashews, if necessary. Roast like hazelnuts, until lightly browned, about 12 to 15 minutes.

Recipe developed for AP by Diane Morgan, courtesy Pear Bureau Northwest

N.C. HHS says auditor knew of hospital payment problems in '97

By Gary D. Robertson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH - State health officials said Monday the Office of the State Auditor knew of problems with their Medicaid program back in 1997 - long before Auditor Ralph Campbell Jr. released last week's scathing review of supplemental hospital funding.

Campbell's office disputed the allegation by state Health and Human Services Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom that Campbell could have stopped problems within Medicaid had he investigated sooner.

Campbell's April 13 audit criticized how \$1.2 billion in payments to about 120 hospitals was distributed between 1997 and 2003. The spending, known as the Disproportionate Share Hospital program (DSH), was aimed at bridging the gap between Medicaid's reimbursements and the true cost of treating Medicaid patients.

The review also questioned how the state spent \$414 million in federal money and charged that the Division of Medical Assistance, which runs Medicaid, "ceded control" of the hospital reimbursement

program to Carolinas Medical Center and its Greensboro attorney.

Campbell called it the most damaging review he had released since taking office in 1993 and said he has forwarded it to state and federal prosecutors.

Odom and others within the Easley administration have criticized Campbell's report as rehashing problems that were made public last year and have since been resolved.

Campbell said last week that his office did not uncover problems sooner because its annual HHS audits focused mainly on Medicaid claims.

Federal accountants advised last year that reimbursement programs needed more scrutiny, at about the same time that a series of newspaper reports also highlighted concerns.

On Monday, HHS officials made public a preliminary report issued by the auditor's office in March 1997. That report cited problems with the DSH program.

Four months later, in a final report, the auditor's office removed the problems from the review but said final cost negotiations for hospitals needed to be examined further.

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