

LUKAS VOLGER

Baked Chestnut Risotto with Mushrooms

If you can get an interesting variety of fresh mushrooms for the topping, they're showcased here, so it's a worthwhile opportunity. And porcini is a decadently distinctive flavor in the risotto, but other types of dried mushrooms work too—particularly one of those forest blends. Lastly, the Parmesan cheese truly is optional. Make this vegan, and really just as good, by opting for the olive oil over butter and skipping the little bit of cheese.

Serves 4 as a main

1 cup roasted & peeled chestnuts (from a 5.2 ounce package, or [roasted on your own](#))

About ¼ cup dried porcini mushrooms

¼ cup dried shiitake mushrooms (4-6)

4 tablespoons butter or olive oil, divided

1 large leek, or 2-3 smaller ones, white and pale green parts only, sliced thinly

2 bay leaves

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 ½ cups arborio rice

½ cup dry white wine

8 ounces fresh mushrooms, preferably a variety, torn into bite-sized pieces

1 tablespoon whiskey or bourbon

Freshly ground black pepper

Freshly grated parmesan cheese (optional)

Preheat the oven to 325 F.

Set aside 6 of the chestnuts to use for topping the risotto, and place the rest in a saucepan along with the dried mushrooms and 6 cups water. Bring to a simmer, then remove from the heat let stand for about 20 minutes, until the mushrooms are soft. Use a skimmer or slotted spoon to remove the reconstituted mushrooms and coarsely chop them (discarding the tough shiitake stems). Measure out 2½ cups of the mushroom broth, reserving the rest.

In a dutch oven or other oven-safe pot that comes with a lid, melt 2 tablespoons butter or olive oil over medium heat, then add the leeks, bay leaves, and salt. Cook until the leeks are tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the rice, stirring for another minute or two, until fragrant. Then raise the heat slightly and stir in the wine. Once it's absorbed, stir into the measured mushroom liquid and the

chopped reconstituted mushrooms. Bring to a simmer, lid the pot, and transfer to the oven. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, until the rice is tender and has absorbed most of the liquid. Leave the pot covered after removing from the oven.

Meanwhile, use a slotted spoon to transfer the soaking chestnuts to a tall measuring cup, and cover with enough of the mushroom liquid to measure 1½ cups. Use an immersion blender to thoroughly puree until you have chestnut cream. Season with a few pinches of salt, to taste. Also while the risotto is in the oven: In a skillet, melt the remaining butter or warm the remaining olive oil, then sear the fresh mushrooms over medium-high heat until nicely browned and just tender (timing will vary depending on type of mushroom). Coarsely chop or quarter the reserved chestnuts, then stir them in. Deglaze the pan with the whiskey and season with salt. Remove from the heat.

Once the risotto is out of the oven, add the chestnut cream and stir thoroughly. Season with black pepper and taste for salt. Let the pot sit covered until it's time to eat, and if you need to re-warm, do so on the stove top, stirring in a few ladlefuls of the mushroom liquid to loosen the risotto as needed (there will likely be a bit of extra liquid). Ladle into warmed, shallow bowls, then top with the seared mushrooms, a few gratings of Parmesan if using, and minced chives. This is extra-good ladled over a pat of butter, or with a finishing drizzle of olive oil.