

Quail Risotto

Risoto con le quaglie (adapted from *Francesco's Kitchen*, Ebury Press, 2007)



Ingredients

4 oven-ready quail
4 slices lardo (cured pork fat) or pancetta
1/2 onion, finely chopped
60 ml/2 fl oz olive oil
50g/ 2 oz butter
fresh rosemary sprig
fresh sage leaf
half a glass of dry white wine
1 litre/ 1-3/4 pints stock
350g arborio rice, well washed
salt and pepper
50g/2oz Parmesan



Method

1. Season the quail, wrap each one in a slice of pancetta, and tie in place with butcher's string.
 2. Sauté the finely chopped onion in a heatproof casserole with the oil and butter - plus some rosemary and one sage leaf to enhance the flavour. When the onion is golden brown, remove the sage and rosemary and add half a glass of dry white wine and the salted and peppered quails (together with their livers and hearts). Turn the quails regularly so that they cook throughout and brown evenly (30 minutes or so).
 3. Take the casserole from the heat, remove the quail and set aside to cool. When you can handle them, take the meat from the bones (keeping the breasts whole). Set the breasts aside in a warm place with a little of the juice from the pot to keep them moist.
 4. Return the casserole with the remaining cooking liquid to the stove and add the pieces of quail meat and a little stock. Add the rice, stirring well and continue to cook, gradually adding the rest of the stock and stirring frequently until the rice is al dente. Add the grated Parmesan at the end.
 5. To serve, place a warm quail breast on top of each serving of the risotto, together with some of the cooking juices.
 6. Some people prefer to cook the quails separately in the oven for 15 minutes and then place them whole on each plate of risotto.
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Alterations to the recipe

Lisa writes: being an unrepentant meddler, I couldn't resist modifying the recipe. First, I had to reduce the quantities for there were only two of us dining. Second, for two people I used 3 quails - they were all cooked in the oven (for 15 minutes), wrapped in their little pancetta robes. At the end of the cooking time, I removed the meat from the bones of one of the quails and kept the other two birds whole (because I really dug the picture in the book which did present the dish this way). I stirred the bits of quail meat into the rice as it was cooking, per the recipe and in this way we enjoyed the best of both worlds!
