

Saffron Risotto with Pan-Broiled Fennel Shrimp

For the Fennel Shrimp:

2 tsp olive oil
1 tbsp Sambuca or Pernod
1-tsp fennel seed
2½ pounds medium-size shrimp, peeled and butterflied
½ tsp kosher salt
½ tsp black pepper

For the Saffron Risotto:

1-tbsp olive oil
1 large Spanish onion, cut into small dice
2 carrots, peeled, if desired and cut into small dice
1 celery stalk, cut into small dice
2½ cups Arborio rice
1 tsp saffron threads
2 fresh or canned tomatoes diced
1 cup white wine
9 cups chicken broth
1 tbsp unsalted butter (optional)
½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
¼ cup chopped fresh Italian flat-leaf parsley leaves, for garnish

To marinate the shrimp: Place the oil, Sambuca, fennel and shrimp in a large mixing bowl and set aside.

To make the risotto: Place a large skillet over medium heat and when it is hot, add the oil. Add the onion, carrots and celery and cook until they are soft, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add the rice and cook, stirring for a minute, until it is well coated. Add the saffron and tomatoes and cook for 1 minute. Add the wine and cook until it has been absorbed, about 2 minutes.

Add ½ cup broth, ½ cup at a time, and cook until all the liquid has been absorbed, about 18 to 20 minutes, stirring well after each addition. Do not add more than 8 cups broth. Add the butter and Parmesan cheese and stir well.

Place the remaining 1-cup broth in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat.

To make the Fennel Shrimp: Remove the shrimp from the marinade, discarding the excess, and sprinkle it with the salt and pepper. Place a large skillet over medium-high heat and when it is hot, add the shrimp and cook until it turns pink, about 5 minutes.

Just prior to serving, add the boiling broth to the risotto and stir well. Transfer to heated individual shallow bowls and serve immediately. Garnish with the parsley and Fennel shrimp.