



Fregola Risotto with Wild Mushrooms & Smoked Tea Broth

I use Lapsang Souchong tea as it's very smoky, but Assam or another smoked tea will work too. As long as it's well covered with liquid you don't need to continually stir fregola risotto in the first 10 minutes or so, just towards the end as it gets thicker.

Serves 4 as a starter or light meal



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon Lapsang Souchong tea (6g/1½oz)
- 7 cups boiling water (1.75 litres/3½ pints)
- 30g dried mushrooms (1oz)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (60ml)
- 1 red onion, finely diced
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 300g fregola (10½oz)
- 50g cold butter, diced (1¾oz)
- 35g freshly grated parmesan (1¼oz)
- Small handful flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

METHOD

1. Steep tea in boiling water for 5 minutes. Place mushrooms in a large heatproof bowl, strain tea over them, cover and set aside for 30–60 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, place oil and onion in a large high sided frying pan over low-medium heat.
3. Add 2–3 teaspoons of salt, cover and cook for 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until just starting to colour.
4. Drain mushrooms, reserving them and the soaking water except for any grit in the bottom of the bowl. If mushrooms are large, run a knife through them without chopping them too much.
5. Add fregola to onion and stir for a minute or so until it's hot to the touch.
6. Add mushrooms and about half the soaking water and stir to combine well.
7. Increase heat and bring to the boil, then reduce heat so it's just gently bubbling.
8. Cook for 15–20 minutes, stirring often and adding more soaking water as needed until fregola is al dente. You may not need all of the water and timing will depend on the size and texture of the fregola. After about 10 minutes, stir risotto almost constantly, increasing heat a little.
9. Once fregola is al dente, add butter and most of the parmesan, reserving just a little for garnish, and beat vigorously to incorporate it. Cover and set aside for 5 minutes.
10. Stir in parsley, and a little more water if you want it soupier, taste and add more salt if needed. Serve sprinkled with remaining parmesan.