

Lemon-Thyme Risotto with Asparagus (from *366 Delicious Ways to Cook Rice, Beans, and Grains*, Andrea Chesman)

Yield: 4-6 servings

This is a fine way to salute asparagus season. Lemon-thyme adds a delicate lemony aroma to this risotto. If you don't have access to it, use regular thyme leaves and increase the lemon zest in the recipe to $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon.

1 lb asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces
5 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups high-quality vegetable or chicken broth
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry white wine
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp grated lemon zest
1 tsp fresh lemon thyme or regular thyme leaves
1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
2 shallots, minced
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups uncooked Arborio rice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Blanch the asparagus in boiling water to cover until just tender, about 4 minutes. Plunge into cold water to stop the cooking. Drain and set aside.

In a medium saucepan, combine the broth, wine, lemon zest, and thyme. Heat to simmering.

In a large nonstick skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the shallots, garlic, and rice, and toss to coat with the oil. Sauté for 3-5 minutes, until the rice appears toasted.

Add 1 cup of the simmering broth to the rice and reduce the heat to medium. Stir until the liquid is mostly absorbed. Continue adding more broth, 1 cup at a time, cooking and stirring as the liquid is absorbed. It will take a total of 18-35 minutes for the liquid to be absorbed and the rice to become tender and creamy. Stir in the cheese, then the asparagus. Season to taste with salt and pepper, if needed. Serve hot.