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Recipe number twenty-three

This pasta dish is not really pasta and not really rice, not really Italian and not really Spanish. I first ate something similar at the house of Hildegard, our friend in the south of France. It is inspiring, it invites you to try new combinations, and it always tastes delicious.

Risini con peperoni «Pasta rice» with peppers

The risini can be prepared in advance. It is done in four steps:

Step 1a few threads of saffron soak in a little hot water.

Step 2: make 1 l of stock The simplest way: dissolve two stock cubes in 1 l of water, meat, chicken or vegetable, as you prefer.

Step 3: 600 g red and yellow peppers trim, cut into 1.5 cm pieces and sweat in
6 tbsp olive oil . Then season with
1 clove of garlic , crushed.
Salt, pepper and peperoncino and add the saffron with its water; set aside.

Step 4: 360 – 400 g risini add to the peppers and heat. Stir again and again, pouring in more stock – exactly as for a risotto. After about 6 minutes take the pan off the heat, but do not cover it. The pasta is now half done and waits until you finish it.

To finish: Put the pot back on the heat and go on cooking the risini with stock, stirring, and season. They must on no account become dry, so keep pouring in more liquid. They should be on the «soupy» side – similar to a risotto.

Possible variations (reminiscent of paella!):

about 30 – 40 g spicy paprika sausage dice small and sweat with the peppers from the start,
or

about 300 g fish fillet dice small, fry separately and fold into the risini right at the end,
and/or

600 g mussels (cozze) clean, open them separately in a wide pot with a little olive oil and garlic,
use the mussel liquor like the stock for cooking the risini and at the end
decorate the plate with the cozze.

200 g fine green peas add as a delicious vegetarian variation!

Podere Riparbella

Agriturismo ecologico

Agricoltura biologica

58024 Massa Marittima, Italia

T +39 0566 91 55 57

www.riparbella.com



A LITTLE LINGUISTIC CONFUSION

All kinds of capsicum – mild or hot – belong to the same genus. The large sort used as a vegetable is called Paprika in Germany, while Switzerland and South Tyrol follow the Italian and call it Peperoni. The small hot pods are called Peperoni or Chili in Germany, whereas the Swiss use the Italian name: Peperoncini.

PASTA RICE OR RICE PASTA?

Risini are small pasta shapes in the form of a grain of corn or rice. The frequently heard name «rice noodles» is misleading, for they are made not from rice flour but from durum wheat semolina.