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BARLEY AND CAULIFLOWER “RISOTTO”

This “risotto” is redolent of the heady aromas of anchovy, cumin, and garlic, and makes a delicious base for sautéed, roasted, or grilled mollusks of all types, from clams to scallops to octopus. Alternatively, think of the crunchily dried variation as the gluten- free breadcrumbs of the future. One spoonful of this concoction is the ultimate topping for mollusks before baking or broiling.

SERVES 4

2 cups pearled barley

8 cups water

1 tablespoon kosher salt

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 tablespoon extra- virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

2 anchovy fillets, chopped

½ teaspoon ground caraway seed or cumin

1 head cauliflower (about 1½ pounds), stems and florets grated

½ cup dry white wine

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

Grated zest of ½ lemon

1. Combine the barley, water, and salt in a medium saucepot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover the pot, and cook until the barley is tender, 30 to 40 minutes. Set a colander over a bowl and drain the barley; set aside the cooking liquid.
2. In a separate saucepot, melt the butter with the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic, anchovies, and caraway and cook until the garlic is sizzling and fragrant.
3. Stir in the cauliflower and turn the heat to high. Cook, stirring occasionally, until contents of the pot begin to sizzle again. Add the wine and continue cooking until it has evaporated completely, about 2 minutes. The cauliflower should be tender at this point. If not, add a little of the barley cooking water and simmer until it is.
4. When the cauliflower is tender, stir in the barley and season to taste with salt and pepper. Add barley cooking water until the mixture has the consistency of a creamy risotto. Rewarm over low heat, if necessary, stirring frequently. Divide among four shallow bowls, garnish with the parsley and lemon zest, and serve immediately.

VARIATION: Immediately after adding the barley and without adding extra liquid, spread the cooked mixture on a baking sheet to cool and dry. Stir in minced fresh herbs such as parsley or thyme and grated cheese, and use as a topping for shellfish. Spoon some into open bivalves (clams, oysters, or mussels), drizzle with olive oil, and broil until crisp. Store any remaining “crumbs” in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.



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