

Low Merit

Please note – These are extracts from one student’s response

Risotto is a rice dish that originated in Italy. The most popular are Vialone Nano, Carnaroli and Arborio. The rice is different because each grain has two shells of layers. The inner shell is robust and strong whereas the outer shell is fragile and weak. The rice is not cooked in water; it is cooked in chicken or beef stock. Risotto is cooked using the absorption method, but instead of adding all the stock at once and waiting for it to boil, small amounts of stock are added for however long it takes to soften the rice – about 25 – 30 mins. This is done so the starch around the rice dissolves. When the risotto is cooked, parmesan cheese is added for taste.

Risotto came over to New Zealand with the Italians after the Second World War. It was introduced as a light meal often served as lunch. Risotto became very popular in the 1990s; just 10 years after the microwave became an everyday household item. It also gave New Zealanders a chance to branch out and add a new product to their inventory. This also gave the working woman a fast way to make a delicious meal with little or no effort. Par cooked rice and ready-made stocks were provided. The flavourings were already included and sometimes also dehydrated vegetables. You could prepare the convenience food as is or add your own fresh herbs, vegetables or cheese to the mixture. It did mean you did not have to collect up lots of different ingredients and spend time making the stock from scratch or measuring ingredients. 1

This does not mean that every New Zealander makes risotto from a box. There are people who make it from scratch, but it does mean there is an easier, quicker option for those in New Zealand who need it. Meats like chicken are often used in risotto here whereas in Italy vegetables such as mushrooms are more authentic. Seafood and spicy sausages are also used to flavour Italian risotto along with a strongly flavoured parmesan cheese. In New Zealand we use bacon for extra flavour and tasty cheese if we don't have any parmesan – it just depends on what is available in the cupboard and fridge. 2

Risotto has many different textures and this is decided by whoever is cooking it. While in Italy it has a wetter consistency, it can vary depending on the ingredients used such as the type of rice.

Risotto is a low maintenance convenient food to make. It only requires one pot to cook in which means less dishes. It also only takes 20 -30 minutes to cook which is a lot less than cooking a roast meal every day. In NZ we choose to use pre-made stocks (dried or liquid) when making risotto which makes cooking this dish for dinner a lot easier for people working in full-time jobs, as you might get home at 5.30pm and need to get dinner on the table in 30-40 minutes. 3