

# Chicken Cacciatore with Risotto

Cacciatore means “hunter’s style” in Italian, and it’s typically a braising method for chicken (or rabbit) with tomatoes and other vegetables, including mushrooms, onions, and herbs.

The chicken part of this meal was the simple part to the much more complicated risotto, but even that’s not so bad. I chose whole wheat short grain rice for my risotto, which doubled the cooking time, but you can choose regular white, arborio. I used boneless, skinless chicken thighs, but you could easily use chicken breasts, or a combination, and the chicken doesn’t have to be boneless – though I recommend the skinless, since the braising method would tend to make the skin sort of rubbery otherwise.

*6 boneless **chicken** thighs*

***salt** and **pepper***

*2 tablespoons **olive oil***

*2 cloves of **garlic**, chopped*

*$\frac{1}{2}$  cup **onions**, chopped*

*1 large can **plum tomatoes**, crushed, with juice*

*1 large **leek**, chopped*

*3 tablespoons **butter***

*3 handfuls **short grain rice**, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup*

*2 cups **chicken broth**, plus 3 cups **water**, heated to boiling*

*$\frac{1}{4}$  cup **parmesan cheese**, shredded*

Heat a frying pan over medium heat, with 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Season the chicken thighs with the salt and pepper,

and brown them off, about 3 minutes per side. Remove the chicken, and put in the garlic and the onion, and sweat. Add the tomatoes, plus any herbs you like (basil or thyme would work well here) and bring to a rapid boil. Return the chicken and cover, and reduce the heat to a simmer. and cook until the chicken is cooked through – at least 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring the chicken stock and the water to a simmer in a saucepan. In another pan (preferably, a saucier), heat 2 tablespoons of butter, and add the leek, and cook until wilted. Add the rice, and stir, allowing the rice to soak up the butter, and turn pearly. Begin adding the hot stock, about three or four ladles-full to start. You don't need to constantly stir the rice, but you do need to keep an eye on it, and stir it occasionally, to make sure it doesn't scorch in the pan and run out of liquid. Keep adding more liquid, a ladle at a time. I also fortified the cooking liquid for the rice with some of the excess liquid from the chicken, which added flavor as well as a rosey color to the rice. It'll take about 20 minutes for white risotto or 45 for brown to get to the point where you can taste a grain or two, and they're chewy, but not so much so that they stick to your teeth. At this point, you can keep cooking it to whatever consistency you prefer. I like it the consistency of wet oatmeal. Remove it from the heat, and stir in the remaining tablespoon of butter and the shredded cheese. Taste for seasoning.