

Vegan butternut squash risotto with sage and asparagus

- 1 butternut squash, halved lengthways, scoop out the seeds and save for later
 - 1 tsp. sea salt
 - 1 tsp. cracked black pepper
 - 1 tsp. paprika
 - 1/2 tsp. smoked paprika
 - 1 tsp. chilli flakes
 - 1 tsp. onion powder
 - 1 tsp. garlic powder
 - 2 tbsp. olive oil
 - handful sage leave, roughly chopped
 - 5/6 asparagus spears, sliced into chunks
 - 1 onion, finely diced
 - 1 celery stick, finely diced
 - 3 large cloves of garlic, crushed/grated
 - 1 & 1/2 cups risotto rice
 - 1 large glass white wine
 - 1-pint vegan vegetable stock, hot
 - 2 tbsp. nutritional yeast
 - 30g cold vegan butter, diced
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- Place the butternut squash into a baking dish. Season with the salt and pepper, then add both paprika's, onion powder, garlic salt and half of the chilli flakes, drizzle over the oil and massage it all into the squash.
 - Place into a pre-heated oven (200 degrees) for 35-40 minutes or until tender, skin side down.
 - Once softened, dice half of the squash up into small cubes; you can remove the skin or keep it on. (Save the other half for later.)
 - Place the diced squash back into the baking dish and sprinkle over the sage, seeds and asparagus. Mix a little into the oil in the dish, try and lay everything as flat as possible and place back into the oven to crisp up. Turning over once or twice.
 - Whilst this is in the oven, remove the skin from the other half of squash and blend with the nutritional yeast to create a smooth cream. Set aside.
 - Next, make the risotto, sauté the onions and celery until soft but not browned.
 - Add the garlic and cook for a few minutes before adding the rice. Cook this until the grains become translucent.
 - Pour in the wine and simmer until the rice soaks up the liquid.
 - Next start to ladle in the stock, little by little, stirring and letting the rice soak it up. You want the rice to still have a bite so do not overcook. Probably around 20 minutes. I added just over a pint in the end.
 - Sprinkle in the rest of the chilli flakes and stir.
 - Now pour in the squash cream and stir through, it should be creamy and not dry.
 - Turn the heat off and place the butter into the rice, cover and leave for 10 minutes whilst you remove the crispy squash from the oven.
 - Stir the risotto, then spoon into a bowl and top with a good helping of the crispy squash and asparagus mix. Drizzle over some extra virgin olive oil and serve.