

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.
 - In a pestle and mortar add the salt, pepper, paprika, chilli flakes, onion powder, garlic powder and fennel seeds. Crush and grind this, do not worry if it not finely ground, you just want to fennel to be crushed a little.
 - Drizzle in the olive oil and mix well, then massage it all into the squash.
 - Place in a preheated oven at 200°C for 35–40 minutes, or until tender, skin-side down.
 - Once softened, dice half of the squash into small cubes. You can remove the skin or leave 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. Toss everything in the oil from the dish, then spread it out as flat as possible. Return to the oven to crisp up, turning once or twice.
 - While this is in the oven, remove the skin from the other half of the 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 adding the stock little by little, stirring and allowing the rice to absorb it before adding more. You want the rice to still have a little bite, so don't overcook it. This will probably take around 20 minutes; I used just over a pint of stock in total.
 - 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 off the heat and stir the butter through the rice. Cover and leave for 10 minutes while 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.