



2025

Recipe a Risotto alla Milanese

The classic recipe for Risotto alla Milanese, a brief history of the dish, my culinary notes and tasting tips, and recommendations for where to try authentic risotto in Milan.

Gusto Italiano Journey





Brief History and Cultural Context

1. **Origin:** Risotto alla Milanese is one of the most famous dishes of Milan and Lombardy. It is based on Arborio/Carnaroli cheese, broth, saffron, and the risotto technique.
2. **Legend:** A common myth connects the appearance of saffron in risotto to the 14th–17th centuries. One famous story tells that saffron first appeared in risotto in a stained-glass workshop (or construction workshop), where a wedding assistant, to please the bride, added saffron to the rice, creating a bright yellow color. Another version claims that saffron was used for coloring during the construction of the Duomo cathedral. Historically, Lombardy traded in saffron; the plant was cultivated in some areas, and the spice became available to the court kitchen.
3. **Development of the dish:** In the 19th century and beyond, risotto cemented its reputation as an "urban" dish of Milan—elegant yet simple. Over the course of the 20th century, the recipe became standardized: saffron became the key note, and "manticano" (the stirring in of butter/cheese at the end) the finishing touch.
4. **Culinary role:** Risotto alla Milanese is often served as a standalone first course or as a side dish with Ossobuco alla Milanese (osso buco)—a classic Milanese combination: creamy saffron risotto and braised beef shank.

Taste and Texture Impressions

- **Appearance:** The rich golden-yellow color from saffron is its signature.
- **Aroma:** Subtle, floral, slightly earthy from the saffron; the background aroma is the aroma of good broth and butter.
- **Taste:** A balance between the richness of the broth, the oiliness of the Manticano, and the light spiciness of the saffron; if Parmesan is added, it adds umami and salt.
- **Texture:** Creamy, but with a slight bite in the center—al dente. The risotto should hold its shape, not be a runny soup, and not stick together into a single, sticky dough.

Gusto Italiano Journey



Classic Recipe - Risotto alla Milanese

Ingredients (serves 4):

- 320 g Arborio or Carnaroli rice (traditionally, Carnaroli or, in some recipes, Vialone Nano; Carnaroli produces a creamier texture)
- 1.0–1.2 l hot meat broth (beef or chicken) — keep over low heat
- 50 g saffron (preferably a pinch of soaked saffron threads; the classic recipe uses very little — ≈ 0.1 – 0.2 g of dry threads)
- 60 g butter (divide: 30 g for frying, 30 g for "mantecato")
- 40–50 g grated Parmesan (Parmigiano Reggiano) — optional (in the Milanese tradition, they sometimes limit themselves to just butter and saffron)
- 1 medium onion (or 1 small onion) shallots), finely chopped
- 1–2 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil
- 120 ml dry white wine (optional)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cooking Technique (Classic)

1. Preparing the saffron: Soak the saffron threads in 2–3 tablespoons warm stock or hot water for 10–15 minutes to release the flavor and color.
2. Heat the stock and keep it hot on the stovetop.
3. In a saucepan or wide frying pan, melt 1/2 of the butter with 1–2 tablespoons of oil, add the finely chopped onion. Sauté over low heat until the onion is translucent (do not brown).
4. Add the rice and stir for 1–2 minutes, until each grain becomes glossy (this is called "tostatura"—frying the rice).
5. Pour in the wine and let it evaporate, stirring. Begin adding the hot broth, one ladle at a time: pour, stir, wait until it's almost completely absorbed, and then add the next ladle. Cook over moderate heat. The total cooking time is 16–18 minutes for Carnaroli (13–15 minutes for Arborio). The rice should be al dente—with a slight set in the center.
6. Two to three minutes before the end of cooking, add the soaked saffron along with the liquid, distributing the color and flavor evenly.
7. When the rice is done (creamy, with grains separating but not dry), remove from heat. Quickly stir in the remaining butter and some (or all) of the grated Parmesan. Taste and add more salt and pepper if needed.
8. Serve immediately, hot, best in risotto bowls. You can add a small crumb of butter and a pinch of saffron to the surface for decoration.



Cooking Tips

- Carnaroli produces a more stable, al dente texture and a silky sauce; Arborio is creamier and quicker.
- The key is constant stirring and gradual addition of broth; do not rinse the rice before cooking.
- Saffron is the key: don't overdo it, but don't skimp either (the flavor and golden color are signature).
- The classic Milanese version used less cheese—sometimes without Parmesan altogether—relying on manticano (a honey emulsion of butter and rice starch) to preserve the purity of the saffron flavor.

A list of trusted restaurants in Milan where you can try authentic Risotto alla Milanese.

1. Trattoria Milanese

- Address: Via Santa Marta, 11, 20123 Milano MI
- Rating: \approx 4.3–4.5 (Google)
- About the place: A classic Milanese trattoria, serving traditional Lombard cuisine, often praised for its risotto and ossobuco.
- Price: risotto portion \approx €12–18

2. Ratanà

- Address: Via Gaetano de Castilia, 28, 20124 Milano MI (in the Isola / Porta Nuova area)
- Rating: \approx 4.4–4.6
- About the place: A modern interpretation of Lombard cuisine; good quality ingredients, original approach.
- Price: Risotto \approx €18–28

3. Antica Trattoria della Pesa

- Address: Via Giovanni Battista Sammartini, 29 (there's also a historic restaurant in the area), check the website
- Rating: \approx 4.1–4.4
- About the place: One of Milan's oldest restaurants, a conservative classic, perfect for a traditional risotto.
- Price: \approx €15–25

4. Il Luogo di Aimo e Nadia

- Address: Via Montecuccoli, 6, 20147 Milano MI
- Rating: \approx 4.6–4.7
- About the place: A fine dining restaurant with a history; signature and high-quality versions of classic dishes.
- Price: Risotto tastings / à la carte \approx €30+ (depending on the menu)



5. Trippa

- Address: Via Giorgio Vasari, 1, 20135 Milano MI (or other permanent location - please confirm)
- Rating: \approx 4.4–4.6
- About the establishment: A modern trattoria with seasonal and signature dishes; sometimes offers interesting versions of risotto.
- Price: \approx €20–30

6. Ristorante Da Giacomo

- Address: Via Pasquale Sottocorno, 6, 20129 Milano MI
- Rating: \approx 4.2–4.5
- About the establishment: Traditional Italian cuisine with an emphasis on seafood and Milanese dishes; classic interior. Price: \approx €20–€30

7. Osteria del Treno (Osteria del Treno / Trattoria)

- Address: Via San Gregorio, area - check (Milan has several old trattorias)
- Rating: \approx 4.1–4.4
- About the place: Traditional Milanese cuisine, often appreciated by locals for its home-style flavor.
- Price: \approx €12–€20

8. Al Mercato

- Address: Via Carlo Imbonati / Corso Como - check the website for the exact address
- Rating: \approx 4.2–4.5
- About the place: A modern eatery with good ingredients; classic risottos are occasionally on the menu. Price: \approx €15–25

Notes on the list

- Some restaurants have seasonal menus—risotto alla Milanese may not be on the menu all the time; I recommend calling or checking the online menu before visiting.
- Ratings are approximate (as of 2025), taken from Google/Tripadvisor, and are subject to change.
- For a signature pairing, try ordering risotto alla Milanese with ossobuco—it's a classic pairing.

Gusto Italiano Journey