

Pearl Barley Risotto with Chicken and Wild Mushrooms

A blood sugar-friendly twist on classic risotto using nutty pearl barley, lean chicken, and earthy mushrooms for sustained energy without the glucose spike.

Prep: 10 min

Cook: 50 min

Total: 60 min

Servings: 4

GL 8.3 / GI 25

Ingredients

provides fat to slow glucose absorption butter

heart-healthy monounsaturated fat olive oil

low-GI aromatic vegetable large shallots, finely sliced

minimal glycemic impact garlic clove, chopped

lean protein slows carbohydrate absorption skinless chicken breasts, cut into chunks

GI of 35, excellent low-glycemic grain choice pearl barley

alcohol content is minimal after cooking dry white wine

very low GI, high fiber mixed wild and chestnut mushrooms, chopped

herb with no glycemic impact fresh thyme leaves

choose low-sodium variety hot chicken stock

fat and protein help moderate glucose response grated Parmesan cheese

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optional garnish, negligible glycemic impact fresh chives, snipped

optional garnish Parmesan shavings

Instructions

Step 1

Heat the butter and olive oil together in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat until the butter melts and begins to foam gently.

Step 2

Add the finely sliced shallots and chopped garlic to the pan with a pinch of salt and freshly ground black pepper. Sauté for approximately 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the shallots become translucent and fragrant but not browned.

Step 3

Stir in the chunked chicken breast pieces and cook for 2-3 minutes, turning occasionally, until the chicken is lightly sealed on all sides but not fully cooked through.

Step 4

Add the pearl barley to the pan and stir continuously for about 1 minute to toast the grains lightly and coat them with the oil and butter, which helps develop a nutty flavor.

Step 5

Pour in the white wine and stir constantly until the liquid is almost completely absorbed by the barley, which should take 2-3 minutes. The wine adds acidity that balances the richness of the dish. Note: The alcohol will completely evaporate during cooking, leaving only flavor with negligible carbohydrate content.

Step 6

Add the chopped mushrooms and fresh thyme leaves, stirring to combine. Pour in approximately three-quarters of the hot chicken stock (about 750ml), reserving the remainder for adjusting consistency later.

Step 7

Reduce the heat to low and maintain a gentle simmer for 40-45 minutes, stirring every 5-7 minutes to prevent sticking. The barley should become tender but retain a pleasant chew, and the mixture should be creamy but not soupy. Add additional stock as needed if the risotto appears too dry during cooking.

Step 8

Remove the pan from heat and stir in the grated Parmesan cheese until melted and incorporated. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper as needed. Serve immediately in warmed bowls, garnished with snipped chives and additional Parmesan shavings if desired. For best blood sugar control, pair with a green vegetable side dish or leafy salad.