

Kheer - Risotto Style

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Kheer is a classic Indian dessert, sort of a loose rice pudding made with Basmati rice. This is an East-meets-West adaption of kheer with something of an Italian flair, but preserving the Indian flavors. It's quite simple, and the combination of cardamom and saffron gives a subtle, almost haunting, exotic flavor.

14 oz can Thai coconut milk

2 c milk

2 c water

pinch salt

1/3-1/2 c sugar

5-6 cardamom pods

pinch saffron

2 tbs butter

1 c Arborio or Vialone Nano rice

1/4 c roasted, shelled, unsalted pistachios

1/3 c raisins

(optional) 1/3 c cream

Combine the coconut milk, milk, water, salt, and sugar in a saucepan and place over medium heat. Crack open the cardamom pods and extract the black seeds, discarding the husks. Crush the seeds with a mortar and pestle or a rolling pin. Alternately, run them through a spice grinder to get a coarse grind. Add the ground seeds and the saffron to the milk mixture. When the mixture comes to a boil, reduce heat and keep it simmering.

Heat a large saute pan over a medium flame. Add the butter and let it foam up. When the foam collapses, add the rice and saute for 2-3 minutes until the rice is translucent and you can smell a nice, roasty aroma. Reduce the heat to medium-low, then add 1 cup of the hot milk mixture. Stir until it's mostly absorbed, then add more of the hot milk mixture in 1/2 cup increments with stirring, letting the liquid absorb each time. When you're about 5 minutes from completion, add the nuts and raisins. After the last addition, remove the saute pan from the heat and continue stirring for a minute or two. Add the cream, if desired.

Notes: This can be served warm or at room temperature. Warm, it's loose and creamy. As it cools, it gets more pudding-like; if that bothers you, stir the cream into the kheer just before serving.

I used about 1/3 c sugar in mine, but some might like it a bit sweeter, so feel free to adjust that amount.

Indians would shudder, but I prefer using dark raisins rather than light, just for the color contrast.

The Vialone rice gives a softer, finer texture than Arborio, which is firmer and more separate. Take your choice.

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