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Risotto alla Pilota

Pilota were the men whom used to remove the husks of great piles of rice in the Po Valley. This recipe comes courtesy of Raffaello Seri from Lomdardia who visited one of our village Pizza Nights. Seeing our Italian sausages we immediately fell into conversation about the food of Lombardia and the sausages of Mantova. A variation "with a handle" is served in a pot with a grilled pork chop served bone end sticking up from the risotto so you can alternate bites of chop with a fork of risotto.

360g Vialone Nano of Grumolo delle Abbadesse or St Andrea rice
615ml mineral water or vegetable stock made from carrot, onion & celery
3 or 4 Squisito Tuscan or Mantova sausages, skin removed and crumbled
1/2 an onion, in one piece (to remove later)
1 sprig rosemary, finely chopped
100g Grana Padano cheese, finely grated
2 knobs of butter approx 80g

The traditional method relies on the exact proportion of water to rice and equal weight of sausage to rice then resting covered for 10 mins to continue cooking before serving. The result should be grainy rather than creamy. Put 615ml water in a heavy bottomed casserole and bring to the boil, then add a pinch of salt. Measure 360g rice and pour it through a funnel into the centre of the pan so it forms a peak standing out of the water. When the water comes back to the boil add 1/2 an onion then cook for 12 minutes uncovered, rolling the pan occasionally to stir. After 12 mins the rice should have absorbed all of the water at which point cover the rice with a cloth then cover with a lid to continue cooking for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, melt the butter in another pan, add the sausage and crumble with a wooden spoon then and fry whilst the risotto rests. Uncover the rice then mix with the sausage and 40g Grana Padano. Serves 4.

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