

# Orzotto – Stirring Your Way To Good Health

Orzotto, like the name suggests, is a version of risotto but made with orzo (pearl barley, in Italian). Not only is orzotto healthier by virtue of the fiber of the barley, it also lacks the loads of butter and Parmesan cheese stirred into risotto to give that dish its rich creamy finish. The starchy creaminess is achieved instead with a good dose of extra virgin olive oil and regular stirring; barley's starch needing more coaxing than risotto rice. The end result is a lovely nutty flavour, a filling meal but without the heart-stopping richness that makes risotto more of a special occasion dish. Traditionally orzotto is a rustic dish made with minced pork and chopped spinach or chard but like anything orzotto is adaptable to whatever you have on hand. Diced chorizo, tinned tuna with peas, chicken and corn or just vegetables come to mind. Diced pumpkin with anchovies melted down with caramelised onion is a nice version. Like risotto, the final consistency is up to you; a thicker consistency with all the stock absorbed or the more liquid style of the Veneto region of Italy. While not so photogenic, I think the original orzotto with mince pork and chard is one of my favorite comfort foods.



## Orzotto

hearty meal for two hungry people

- olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 150 g minced pork or pure pork Italian style sausages
- 2 handfuls of pearl barley
- small bunch of spinach or chard, stems removed and leaves well washed
- 1 glass of white wine
- 1 litre of hot stock (chicken or vegetable)
- salt, pepper

Heat oil in pan, sweat the chopped onion, crumble in the minced pork and sauté briefly to seal the meat but don't brown it. Add the pearl barley. Stir for a few minutes, add the white wine and then a ladle of the hot stock. Keep stirring the barley and add more stock as it is absorbed until the barley is cooked, about 25-30 minutes. Add the spinach and stir through, then add a good slug of olive oil and stir well to achieve a creamy consistency. Season to taste.