

Mushroom Risotto With Truffle Butter

It's wild mushroom time again and pine mushrooms and slippery jacks provide perfect flavour and texture for a risotto. But if you want to raise the bar another notch, a mushroom risotto finished with some truffle butter can add a wonderful extra dimension to your mushroom taste experience. Truffle butter is subtle, adding that special flavour of truffles without the over dominant, often lingering flavour, of truffle oil. And with truffle butter you actually get the real deal, bits of truffle. [King Valley Dairy](#), formerly the Myrtleford Butter Factory, I think make the best cultured butter in Australia. It has a lovely fresh tang, without any unpleasant cheesy or rancidness I have found with other brands. They also produce a range of [Fancy Butter](#) with various interesting flavours like smoked salt but the black truffle butter is a clear winner and perfect for risotto, pasta, mashed potatoes or smothered on a piece of rib eye steak. King Valley Dairy is concentrating on expanding wholesale production, so while there are not a lot of stockists in Melbourne as yet this should improve. Try [Obelix and Co](#) in North Fitzroy, Prahran and Queen Victoria markets, shop online or stop at the dairy while in Moyhu, it's a stunning drive to the King Valley taking the Mansfield-Whitfield road. Buy up big and freeze the butter in small lots if you don't think you are going to use it all by the expiry date.



For Two

- 1 cup carnaroli rice
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 litre chicken stock
- knob of butter
- salt
- leaves of 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 300 g [pine mushrooms](#)
- 200 g mix of [shimeji, shiitake and nameko mushrooms](#), sliced
- 2 shallots, finely diced
- 1 clove garlic, finely diced
- 1-2 tsp truffle butter (King Valley Dairy)
- 3 tsp butter
- 50 g grated Parmesan cheese

Clean and then blanch the pine mushrooms in boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain and place on kitchen paper to dry. Slice the

mushrooms. Warm the stock in a small saucepan and keep it on a simmer while you cook the risotto. Melt a small knob of butter in a sauté pan (or whatever pot or pan you like to use for risotto) and gently cook the chopped shallots for a minute or so until soft and translucent. Add the thyme, garlic, sliced pine mushrooms and sautéed for 2 minutes. Turn the heat to medium, add the rice and stir to coat in the butter; after a minute or so when the grains show a slight translucence, pour in a glass of wine. Keep the heat up to bring the wine to a rapid simmer and reduce. When almost evaporated, add a ladle or two of hot stock, swirl the pan and allow to simmer gently until nearly all the liquid is absorbed. Add the sliced shiitake. Keep adding ladles of stock and occasionally swirling the pan until the rice is cooked to al dente, with just a fine thread of chalky white in the middle of the rice grains while a slightly thickened, starchy liquid surrounds them. All up, it will take 15 to 20 minutes to cook. In the last 5 minutes add the softer mushroom, the shimeji and nameko. Turn off the heat, add the grated Parmesan and the truffle and plain butters and stir them in gently so as to amalgamate with and thicken the remaining starchy liquid without breaking up the rice grains. Loosen the risotto with a little stock if needed; it should be creamy without the grains sticking to each other. Serve immediately.

Slippery Jack Pithivier It Is

Some of us will have fond memories of Melbourne's restaurant scene of decades past, where small BYO places produced stunning dishes out of tiny galley kitchens without a sous vide in sight. Others, like *Stephanie's* and *Mietta's*, were

more opulent, cast in the French mould of formal dining and highly worked dishes. It was really worth going out and spending big on food that you knew was probably a two day process and took a great deal of skill and love to prepare. In those days, before celebrity cookbooks and online recipe searches, some patrons may have enthusiastically complimented the chef and tentatively asked for the recipe for such and such a dish only to later realise it was not only difficult to source some ingredients but was probably best left to the experts. And I am sure there were a few chefs that did not reveal every detail, intentionally or unintentionally.

Est Est Est in South Melbourne was one of the last greats of the era, although their approach to the restaurant fit-out would be seen today as really cutting edge. Donovan Cooke and Philippa Sibley* were a formidable team producing some amazing dishes and memories for Melbourne diners. It is curious that after so many years my husband flipped through their cookbook, *Est Est Est Marriages*, deciding the pile of [Slippery Jacks](#) just purchased at the market needed some really special treatment. The *Est Est Est* Slippery Jack pithivier hit the mark perfectly and aided with puff pastry purchased from [Pastry by Patersons](#) along with the wild mushrooms, now also easily available, the task did not seem as daunting as it perhaps did all those years ago. Having said that it was still a long process of multiple components and layers of flavour. All I did was plate, photograph and eat it, so the credit for recreating that great culinary memory is all his.



*Philippa Sibley is now head chef at [Syracuse Winebar Restaurant](#) in the city.

You may be wondering:

Where to get a copy of the book *Est Est Est Marriages*. Try [Books For Cooks](#) in Therry Street, opposite the Queen Victoria Market.

Why was it called [Est Est Est](#)?



Forest Pizza

Forest pizza is my name for pizza topped with Slippery Jack mushrooms (*Suillus luteus*), foraged from Victorian pine forests. This forest pizza will delight mushroom lovers as it really brings out the flavour of the Slippery Jacks. You can also add a few other cultivated varieties such as nameko, shimeji or chestnut mushrooms for added textural variety but this is essentially a Slippery Jack event and now is the time of year they are available from farmers' markets around Melbourne. One tray of these delicacies (around \$6) will be enough for two large pizzas.



Slippery Jacks will bring with them some of their forest environment, so you will have to do a little removal of the forest floor before you set about slicing. Give the caps a wipe with some dampened kitchen paper to remove the slime (that's normal) and the the pine needles. Next, it is advisable to peel the skin off the caps and discard to avoid any tummy upsets.

This is a tomatoless pizza, being topped with mushrooms and cheese and slow cooked onions. The onions are mixed with a little cream which aids in spreading it on the pizza base in lieu of tomato passata. By all means caramelise the onions to a rich golden brown but don't be tempted to add any sugar to speed up the process, there is really no place for sugar in this recipe. I have used sliced bocconcini cheese but I can imagine some young Taleggio would really make for a gourmet pizza experience. And I can report that reheated the next day,

this pizza is still delicious.

Makes two large pizzas

The Dough

- 450 g bread flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 1/2 tsp freeze-dried yeast
- 300 ml tepid water
- 15 ml milk
- 30 ml olive oil

Mix the salt and flour well. Combine the yeast with the water, milk and oil and add to the flour. Beat for 10 minutes in a mixer using a dough hook – the mix should be soft and sticky but gradually come away from the sides of the bowl as it mixes. After mixing dust lightly with flour – the dough should be soft and silky and easy to handle. Alternatively you can knead vigorously by hand □ Place in a bowl and cover with cling film or a tea towel (so the surface does not dry out) and leave to rise for 45- 60 minutes. In fact the longer you leave it to prove with the occasional knock back (pushing the risen dough down into a ball again) the better. When ready to bake, knock back the dough, halve it and roll out one half to fit a pizza tray. If you have a pizza stone heat it up in the oven to 220°C.

The Topping

- 2 brown onions, sliced
- 8-10 Slippery Jacks
- 100 g nameko, shimeji or chestnut mushrooms, sliced
- 2 tbs pure cream or crème fraîche
- leaves of 3 sprigs of thyme
- 2 tbs chopped parsley
- 200 g bocconcini

Saute the onion slowly with a pinch of salt in olive oil. Stir

for time to time until the onions have developed a golden brown colour. Stir through the herbs and set aside to cool. Stir in the cream once the onion mix has cooled. After cleaning and peeling off the caps, slice the Slippery Jacks thickly and sauté them in a little olive oil until just soft. Add the other mushroom and sauté for a couple of minutes more. Remove from the heat. Slice the bocconcini thickly. Spread half the onion mix over the pizza base using the back of a spoon. Arrange half the mushrooms over the pizza, followed by half the sliced cheese. Bake for 8 minutes on a pizza stone and then slide pizza off the pizza tray onto the stone for the remaining 3-4 minutes to brown the base. Alternatively, if you don't have a stone bake the pizza on a perforated pizza tray. Prepare the next pizza during the baking time or immediately after the first baking. Enjoy!



Local Fresh Truffles Becoming A Craze

Now is the time to buy some local fresh truffles. There are a few producers around Melbourne now selling their little fungal gems at farmers' markets, online or as part of a truffle hunt, tasting and cooking masterclass package. [Black Cat Truffles](#), [Black Truffle Harvest](#) and [Yarra Valley Truffles](#) are just a few producers of fresh truffles you can check on. The [Truffle Hound](#) runs classes on how to store and cook with truffles. Truffles are becoming quite the in thing, there is now even a [Melbourne Truffle App](#) that tells you where to purchase some and what restaurants will be featuring truffles on their menu during the winter truffle season. You can also sniff out details of 2016 truffle events, such as truffle hunts and dinners, at [Truffle Melbourne](#).

Truffles may be an expensive product but for \$30-40 for a small piece you can actually create a delicious meal of scrambled eggs with sliced truffles for two. I figure you can easily spend \$20 a head for an ordinary egg brunch at a trendy cafe, so why not do it at home with a luxury product instead. I suggest enclosing the eggs you plan to use with the truffle in a plastic container overnight. The truffle aroma will waft its magic way through the egg shell and flavour the eggs. Whisk 5 eggs with 2 teaspoons of cream, season with salt and cook slowly on a low heat, folding them gently with a wooden spatula until just cooked so as to keep a luscious, creamy texture. Remove the pan from the heat from time to time to ensure the eggs do not overcook. Top the scrambled eggs with very thin slices of truffle, best achieved with a mandolin slicer or a dedicated truffle slicer. If your budget allows and it's late enough in the day pair the dish with a glass of

Burgundy. Enjoy.

Pine Mushrooms In Season

Wild pine mushrooms are currently available from farmers' markets. Pine mushrooms or saffron milk caps (*Lactarius deliciosus*) are a large, brightly coloured mushroom with a mildly tangy flavour. As the name suggests, they have a yellow to orange milky sap and are delicious. Their firm texture lends itself to a variety of cooking methods but they are particularly good in stews where, after long cooking, they still hold their shape. Despite their firm texture be careful not to crush them in your shopping bag as they can bruise, leaving a greenish mark on the flesh (harmless but a little unsightly). The pine needles and grit stuck to the surface attest to their wildness but don't be daunted by this as cleaning them is quite simple. First give them a quick wipe with a paper towel and rinse under the tap.



You can then briefly immerse them in boiling water for a couple of minutes and that dislodges any grit or vermin hidden between the gills. You can do this whole or sliced. Contrary to what you might expect boiling them briefly does not result in any loss of flavour and does remove any bitterness.



Add them to risottos, meaty stews, mushroom lasagne, stir fry or grill on the barbeque. Once blanched they can be added to salads where a strong garlic infused olive oil dressing would be perfect. They freeze really well, so it is a good idea to clean a whole lot, spread them out on a tray to cool and dry out a little. Freeze in single layers with baking paper between the layers in shallow plastic containers. It is wonderful to be able to pull a few out of the freezer as you need them through the winter months.

[Melbourne Pine Mushrooms](#) – Bentleigh, Carlton, Coburg, Fairfield, Frankston, Goldsbrough Lane (Melbourne CBD) and Mulgrave Farmers' Markets

Organic Sunrise Wild Mushies -available at [Abbotsford Convent](#), [Collingwood Children's Farm](#) and [Gasworks](#) Farmers' Markets