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## Avocado Risotto? Seriously!

By Susie Iventosch

Traveling is really a fun hobby for a lot of reasons. You get to see new faces and places, learn about different cultures, and try all sorts of exciting new foods! Even travel within the United States offers so many new experiences. Two weeks ago, I was visiting San Antonio, Texas for the very first time, and I discovered that it is a foodie mecca! Right along the river walk, there must be a thousand different restaurants, bars, ice cream shops, and every kind of margarita imaginable.

One of the local traditions is table-side guacamole, where the waiter makes it on a side cart right at the table, using fresh squeezed oranges and lemons as key ingredients along with avocado, garlic, sea salt, cilantro and tomatoes. All of these things were fun and delicious, but the most interesting dish I tried was a grilled chicken breast served over a bed of avocado risotto, topped with rosemary-thyme-balsamic reduction sauce. I had never before heard of using avocados in risotto, and it was fabulous.

When I set about making my own version, I decided to give it a distinctly south-of-the-border flair, and included \*roasted jalapenos, cilantro and a blue goat cheese. This was wonderful served with grilled salmon, but chicken would be great too! If you don't like blue goat cheese, then use regular blue cheese, or \*\*Cotija cheese.

\*To roast jalapeno, trim off stem, seed and cut into quarters. Brush with olive oil and season with sea salt. Roast at 400° for about 10, or until starting to brown. This process takes much of the heat out of the pepper, and leaves just the good flavor with a little kick!

\*\*Cotija [Ko-tee-hah], dry grating cheese similar to Parmesan. The aged version is referred to as "anejo." Both are used crumbled or grated. Source: <http://www.gourmetsleuth.com/Dictionary/C/Cotija-cheese-5788.aspx>.

### Avocado Risotto with Grilled Salmon and Roasted Jalapeno Peppers

(Serves 4-6)

#### INGREDIENTS

Salmon

4-6 salmon filets, seasoned and grilled to desired doneness

Risotto

2-3 tablespoons canola or olive oil

3 green onions, finely chopped

2 shallots, finely chopped

1-2 cloves garlic, minced

1 1/2 cups Arborio rice

2 medium tomatoes, coarsely chopped

1 avocado, pitted and coarsely chopped

1/3 cup minced fresh cilantro

1/2 cup white wine

3 cups chicken broth

1/4 cup blue goat cheese or Cotija cheese

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/2 teaspoon white pepper

Garnish

1-2 large jalapenos, seeded, and \*roasted and sliced



Photo Susie Iventosch

into long strips

(can also chop roasted jalapeno and add right into risotto)

1 avocado, thinly sliced

Fresh cilantro sprigs

1/4 cup blue goat cheese or Cotija cheese

#### DIRECTIONS

Using two pots, heat chicken broth in one and in the other heat oil over medium heat and add garlic, shallots and green onions. Cook until onions are translucent and then add the Arborio rice and cook until just shiny and slightly browned, stirring all the while.

Stir in the white wine and cook over medium heat until the wine is absorbed. Then add one cup of broth and cook until broth is absorbed, stirring often. Repeat adding a second cup of broth. When this cup is absorbed, add diced tomatoes and diced avocados and stir into risotto, before adding final cup of broth. Stir until all broth is absorbed and then stir in the cheese.

Serve with a grilled salmon filet or chicken breast, and garnish with roasted jalapeno strips, slices of avocado and a sprinkling of crumbled blue goat cheese or Cotija cheese and a cilantro sprig.

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