

2004

hazelnut, limoncello, pistachio gelato!

Somehow in the minds of the dr bob cooking team, a real self-freezing ice cream machine had always remained in the category of delayed acquisitions for some remote future date, one of those upscale toys that was an indulgence whose time had not yet come. Which is the beauty of gift giving (receiving!). Out of the blue someone decides for you that the time has come. We had done so as a wedding present for close friends in Italy, after another close friend had taken the plunge herself, researching the best product and verifying the claims with personal experience, and we got a purchase deal (still a considerable pile of lira at the time) from another close friend whose parents had a small appliance store, but soon after marrying, reproduction began and the gelato experience was cut short by the arrival of [two delightful little girls](#), more fun than making ice cream but of course a lot more work.

And without an ice cream machine, you can't really experiment with ice cream recipes. So when bob was browsing in Borders some years ago and spotted the newly issued paperback [Under the Tuscan Sun](#) which marked the beginning of a wave of American fascination with farmhouses and country living in Tuscany, and leafed through it and spotted a hazelnut gelato recipe introduced with superlative hype by the author Frances Mayes, he snatched it up without any immediate plans for execution, although clearly with the intention of one day trying it himself. The whole cooking team read the book, but still this did not push the ice cream machine buy-me button. We did, however, eventually get our [weekend](#) in a farmhouse on a hill in Umbria, as a guest of our first ice cream machine advisor, when we finally were initiated into the mysteries of [pizza making](#).

Then Christmas 2003 arrived, and our dessert-garnishing on-line-shopper [sister-in-law](#) surprised bob with a web-researched best-buy ice cream maker. It was only a matter of time before the hazelnut gelato dream was realized. The first two holiday batches were vanilla and chocolate, since the finicky nieces and nephews, like most American kids below a certain age, wouldn't accept any other flavors. Then we were free to try hazelnut, with a little experience already under our belts. The adult focus group we tried it out on loved it. And repeated compliments more than necessary, going so far as to hint they would gladly accept any overproduction that might occur in the future. A winning strategy for them since we like to please.

And the move from hazelnut (Frangelico) to limoncello, a simple switch of our two favorite Italian liqueurs that proved successful with [cheesecake](#), was the obvious next step. And we couldn't resist the urge to meddle a bit with the details in the modification. While guessing wildly on the amount of limoncello to go with. Looks like we guessed right. More adulation. If only we can figure out how to reduce the fat someday soon...

So the next flavor choice was ani's favorite ice cream flavor: pistachio, which is a favorite Middle East nut. It took a long time for bob to distinguish pistachio from mint ice cream because they both were light green, and mint, though prized in salads and savory dishes by everybody on the dr bob cooking team now, has been on the dr bob dessert blacklist for life. Eventually bob caught on. After tasting a delicious version of pistachio at a new area gourmet gelato storefront Capogiro which even bob had to admit tasted better than his choices, we had to try it ourselves. A Google search leading to [RecipeSource.com](#), and a separate check of [Epicurious.com](#) guided us in our modification to include a teaspoon each of almond and vanilla extract, with a touch of

cardamom from on-line reader feedback to the [Bon Appetit recipe](#). Another success story.

ingredients

hazelnut gelato	limoncello gelato	pistachio gelato
3 egg yolks	3 egg yolks	3 egg yolks
3/4 c sugar	3/4 c sugar	3/4 c sugar
1 T Frangelico	1/4 c limoncello	1 t almond extract
	1 t lemon zest (zest from 1 small lemon)	1 t vanilla extract
2 c [= 1 pt] half and half	2 c [= 1 pt] half and half	2 c [= 1 pt] half and half
1 c heavy cream	1 c heavy cream	1 c heavy cream
juice and zest of 1 lemon		
3/4 c hazelnuts, toasted and chopped/crumbed		3/4 c pistachios, finely crumbed 1/4 c pistachios, roughly chopped

instructions

1. This is a two stage recipe: cooking the custard and cooling, then mixing in add-ins before inserting into the ice cream machine.
2. For the hazelnut gelato, coarsely chop (Frances) or finely crumb (us) the hazelnuts (or divide and do both) and spread out on a cookie sheet and bake at 350° F watching closely until they just turn brown. They turn color quickly once they start and too easily burn shortly thereafter. Set aside.
3. For the pistachio gelato, finely crumb 3/4 c of the unsalted, shelled and peeled (buy them that way) nuts, and coarsely (but not too coarsely) chop the remaining 1/4 c. We put them in a zip-lock bag and used our chicken breast pounder to get the right size.
4. Prepare the lemon zest and for the hazelnut gelato, the lemon juice. Skip this for the pistachio gelato.
5. Wisk or beat together the egg yolks and sugar in the top of a double boiler as though making [zabaglione](#). We found it easier to add the liqueur or extracts/cardamom at this stage to compensate for the extra sugar that stiffens up the mixture. (Frances recommends adding it later with the heavy cream.) The yolks should turn light yellow as in the zabaglione process. It might be a good idea to reserve half the sugar until the next step so the mixture does not lose its liquid state and become too thick. For the pistachio gelato, mix in the finely crumbed pistachios so that their essence cooks into the mixture.
6. Heat up the half and half until it is warm but not scalding (microwave!) and put a half cup into the egg mixture to then add back to the half and half mixture without shocking the eggs from the heat. Or just gradually add it in while continuously beating with electric beaters.

7. Then place the top into the double boiler (preboil the water) and cook beating or stirring constantly until the mixture thickens slightly without boiling. We check that the temperature elevates over 160° F but this seems to be easier to reach than thickening, which takes about 10 minutes. Ani has shown that towards the end one needs to use a wooden spoon to feel the thickening reach the desired point.
8. Cool in the freezer about 30 minutes, covering first with plastic wrap.
9. Remove from the freezer and mix in the heavy cream and remaining ingredients in the nut cases.
10. For the limoncello case, strain the mixture to remove the lemon zest and any lumps for a final smooth consistency. Press hard through the strainer to get the most out of the dregs.
11. Pour into the ice cream maker and process according to the manufacturer's instructions. We set our Lello Gelato machine timer on 40 minutes on the recommendation relayed by our sister-in-law from customer feedback she found while surfing. Maybe 35 is enough. Check near the end of the time period.

notes

1. [Under the Tuscan Sun](#), by Frances Mayes, paperback edition 1997, p.136.
2. Gelato by Lello, no company website yet.
3. Capogiro Gelato, 13th & Sansom, Philly Center City.
4. [Illustrations](#) available.

postscript

This basic recipe can easily be converted into many other variations with a little imagination.

- **lingonberry (-guavaberry) gelato**

bob's [favorite cheesecake flavoring](#) was the next choice. In the limoncello gelato, replace the limoncello and lemon zest by:

- 1 T lingonberry syrup plus 1 T [guavaberry liqueur](#)
or 2 T of lingonberry syrup
- 1/2 to 1/3 c (about 175g) lingonberry preserves
[lingonberry products available at [IKEA USA](#)]

The color is a weird shade of pink, but delicious.

braised pork chops

2004 has been a slow year so far for the food blog. South Beach struck the dr bob team in February. Only gelato had made it to the lineup in January (with frequent variations and repetitions following) but half the team can't even eat it. [Taste, yes!]

March arrives. Spring Break too. And another night of hitting the supermarket on the way home from the Ivory Tower. The other white meat is calling bob's name. Pick me, pick me. The cheap asparagus find from the night before is already done and waiting when the protein entree shows up in the kitchen. bob leaves the execution to ani, who does a bang-up job of imparting taste to the thin cut pork chops. Improvising with our Marsala wine from past experience. Coincidentally the title article in the day's weekly newspaper food section is "Worthy of BRAISE", which is what she did without seeing the paper. Five chops. Two apiece. One left over for another day. Easy. Low carb. Low fat, sort of?

ingredients

1/2 - 3/4 lb thin sliced boneless pork chops
salt and pepper
flour
2 T olive oil
2 cloves garlic, thin sliced
1/4 c Marsala wine
1/4 c water with 1 t tomato paste dissolved in it.

instructions

1. Season the chops with salt and pepper on both sides.
2. Flour the chops, shaking off excess.
3. Brown the chops on both sides in olive oil in a nonstick skillet.
4. Add the garlic, wine and diluted tomato paste.
5. Cover and cook on low heat for about 15 to 20 minutes, or more depending on the thickness of the chops.
6. Serve.

notes

1. Simple. But good enough to remember.
2. [Illustration](#) available.

bob jantzen '74: 30th reunion?

After almost 30 years of post-college life, I have finally acquired a self-freezing ice cream machine only because a sister-in-law thought I might like it and decided that Christmas of 2003 was the right time to act. It had always seemed like too much of an indulgence, even though it's really only a matter of a couple hundred buck investment, hardly anything for a kidless professional couple like us. Who at this age are now destined to only be uncle bob and aunt ani to some actual nieces and nephews and some close friends' children where we get the honorary titles.



aunt ani, real nephew shant, uncle bob (2003)



limoncello gelato (with a little help from zia irene in puglia)

So why are so many of those who are now running the nation, including some of our classmates, seeking more wealth and power than they need or deserve at the expense of the many underpowered and underwealthy of the world while I was still waiting for my ice cream machine? How did the idealism of the 1960s turn into what we are living through now? Where is the caring and fairness that is supposed to underlie the "Judeo-Christian" foundations of our nation?

I came from a working class family and followed my interest in math to Princeton, but got sidetracked into physics with the help of David Derbes '74, then veered back towards math via general relativity which landed me a lifelong connection with Rome (via Remo Ruffini, from John Wheeler's relativity group in the 1970s) that has enriched my life considerably. Graduate school took me to U.C. Berkeley to another Princetonian, Abe Taub *35, just before his retirement. And after 5 years of wandering postdocs including Chapel Hill, Rome, Munich and Cambridge (MA), the math department at Villanova University provided a comfortable academic home, permitting a continuing part time academic life in Italy and bringing Ani and her Armenian-Lebanese heritage into my life.

In 2000 I made a small contribution to holding on to some of Princeton's history by putting on-line *The Princeton Mathematics Community in the 1930s: An Oral History Project*, which I stumbled upon after Abe's death in 1999: <http://www.princeton.edu/mudd/math> .

And since we all need a little humor to help lighten up the harsh reality of our world (and everybody has to eat), I continue to grow our humorous on-line cookbook for those who care to drop by my part of the internet:

<http://www.drbojenterprises.com>

If you have any reflections to share about any of this, I'd be happy to hear from you.

30reunion.htm: 9-mar-2004 [what, ME cook? © 1984 dr bob enterprises]

chicken marsala

Having proven himself with the manly task of digging into shale to plant some shrubs as a border for our new paver-stone patio behind our modest town home, bob forgoes exercising on the Tony Little Gazelle machine after work, leaving it to ani for a change, who in turn skips her Pilates for a short token run on the Gazelle. Leaving bob to deal with the thin sliced chicken breast and 99 cent a pound seasonal asparagus (cheap in 2004!) snatched on the way home. Chicken marsala was already on his mind after a previous evening's report on a restaurant visit by his mom about a veal marsala dish that was slightly off. We can do better was the intent, with chicken slightly more healthy and less guilt-laden as a choice considering the horror stories of how young cows are mistreated to produce commercial veal. At least this time. We still do veal. We're inconsistent.

We'd already done Marcella's veal marsala recipe a few times in the past. The distant past since the details were no longer stored in accessible memory. Instead of pulling out her book bob looked into the approach taken by the food scientists at the [America's Test Kitchen](#) Cook's Illustrated magazine kitchen, in particular in their cookbook *Classic Italian*, a group effort led by the team member with the classic Italian grandmother who inspired him all the way into the food business. But their recipe had pancetta, mushrooms, tomato paste, they advised sweet Marsala (we prefer dry, based on untested prejudice against sweet wines in general, not particularly relevant in cooking). We had no pancetta or mushrooms and did not have tomato paste in our vision. Their advice about garlic, lemon juice and keeping the chicken warm in the oven while doing the more complicated sauce did help us with the simpler route we were looking for though.

So we threw together an amateur [mojito](#) with superfine Splenda (sugar substitute) since we were out of superfine sugar and this year sugar is bad anyway (carb awareness kicks in nationwide), hence the Splenda on hand for ani. Fresh mint was the third key buy on the way home. A little mojito mix and Bacardi light rum and we were in business, using a not-meant-for-shaking tall traveling coffee mug with a couple of small drinking and air holes in the removable top that had to be covered with two fingers during shaking. Over the sink. We prepped the asparagus first before doing the grilled asparagus with parmesan, again not following the recipe in *Classic Italian*. We're food rebels. But not without a cause.

The chicken came together pretty well, while the asparagus was finished off in the broiler (oven). Oops, no pasta or rice or potato to keep them company. Banned from regular consumption by the new food order. And we were too lazy to put a salad together. A few reheated brussel sprouts help out, and some whole wheat pita bread for bob, with more size to feed than ani. The Marsala, especially with the lemon-garlic accent, is a real success. Who would have thought? [We're all bozos on this bus](#), but sometimes the clowns get the job done.

ingredients

- 3/4 lb thin sliced chicken breast (ours had 5 pieces)
- salt and pepper
- flour to coat
- 1 T butter

2 T olive oil
2 T Marsala wine
juice of half a big lemon
2 cloves garlic, pressed

instructions

1. Rinse and pat dry the chicken with paper towels.
2. Sprinkle both sides with salt and pepper and then coat with flour (refined, white, but so little, who cares). Set aside.
3. Heat the oil and butter and then brown the chicken in two shifts since only about half will fit in the nonstick frying pan at a time.
4. Put the first chicken batch in a glass pan in the preheated warm oven while you do the second batch.
5. Remove the second chicken batch to the glass pan and add the wine and lemon juice and reduce a bit, then press in the garlic and toss around a minute or so.
6. Put the chicken back in the pan and let simmer a few more minutes on low heat.
7. Then serve, pouring a little of the sauce over each serving.

notes

1. Oh yeah, the asparagus. After the half cooking by the usual asparagus pot boiling halfway up the stalks treatment, we drained them and put them in a glass dish and sprayed them with extra virgin garlic flavored olive oil and tossed them around a bit to coat, grating in some parmigiano to taste and tossing a bit and then grating a bit more for good measure. Was there some salt and pepper tossed in too? Probably. All inserted into the broiler under careful watch. Browned a bit so you could tell they were close to fire. Yum.
2. I'm not sure of the relevance of that bozos on the bus remark, but it seemed appropriate at the time. It comes from an old weird 1970s comedy album by [Firesign Theater](#) that stuck in my head for all this time.
3. Some may question our assumption that [chickens don't count](#) while small cows do, in our substitution of chicken for veal. Yup, we're inconsistent there too.
4. No pictures were taken since it seemed so easy, but then ani raved about the chicken and bob was surprised at the terrific flavor of the asparagus besides feeling good about the way the chicken turned out, by which time the plates were half-eaten and decidedly unphotogenic. Next time.
5. The next time we did try it with veal, but definitely not as tender.
6. Then we spontaneously invited the in-laws, 7 adults and some kids on a late Sunday afternoon and did the chicken again. They liked it.
7. And then we did it again, and took some [photos](#).
8. We later tried it with thin slices of turkey breast that have appeared in our supermarkets, and ani through in some fresh chopped parsley as a garnish that added a nice little bit of color to the dish. And sliced the garlic instead of pressing it. Tasted great.

garlic yogurt sauce

This is a terrific sauce for eating chicken with. Since it has such a strong taste, any simple baked or grilled chicken will do. Whether it is Armenian or just general Middle Eastern in origin is not clear but there are variations in the whole region of the Eastern Mediterranean. This one comes from a lesson for bob delivered by Nora. Apparently labor saving devices like food processors or hand blenders are not allowed here. The old-fashioned mortar and pestle is not so difficult to use anyway.

ingredients

2 T vegetable oil
1/4 t salt
2–3 garlic cloves (to taste)
1 t lemon juice
1/2 c plain yogurt (dilute to taste).

instructions

1. With mortar and pestle, slowly grind the pressed garlic with the salt making a paste for about 5 minutes. Don't be fooled by the apparently small amount of garlic/salt mixture in the bottom rim of the mortar.
2. Then begin adding the oil 1/2 t at a time, incorporating smoothly, alternating with a few drops of the lemon juice, until both are used up.
3. When a nice paste is formed, add the yogurt.
4. Check for salt.
5. Dilute with more yogurt if too strong for your tastes.
6. Use pestle in larger bowl to smooth out the sauce until silky smooth.

notes

1. [Illustrations](#) available.

grlcsaus.htm: 7-sep-2004 [what, ME cook? © 1984 dr bob enterprises]

sour cream apple blueberry walnut pie

The inspiration for this combination pie comes directly from an article in a women's magazine that bob caught by chance in a doctor/dentist's office on the 14 super foods that can contribute to a more healthy cuisine for those of us Americans who are not only aware of what agribusiness and the food industry is doing to our national health but are ready to act locally to attempt to save ourselves from an eventual possibly unpleasant end should we make it that far. In fact this was a review of a [new book](#) that bob eventually ordered from Amazon after an eccentric food conversation with a colleague lead to the rediscovery of the book title and author with his help. Blueberries and walnuts are on the short list.

But it was really the free product sample at the Costco warehouse store that set the wheels in motion for the 2004 Thanksgiving dessert project. Dried blueberries? They look like purple raisins but they taste like blueberries. Sold! The fresh blueberry season is way too short, and although you can usually get them for 3.99 for a pathetically small plastic container-full out of season, the bob is not quite in the income bracket where that sticker price means nothing. Dried blueberries year round for his oatmeal with flax meal, banana, walnuts and fruit yogurt! Microwaved up with the oatmeal, they even loosen up a bit with the moisture. What a lucky find. One that bob would never have seen on his own wandering the isles impatiently searching for some other target acquisition. Free product samples really work.

The second contributing factor was the whole grain issue. 2004 had to go down in the books as the year of the new carb awareness craze. bob put refined white flour on his hit list. Aim for complex carbohydrates, like whole grain flours, yeah, that was the thing. And since bob loves baked goods, especially at the in-laws, whole wheat pastry flour had to be tried in whatever ways it could substitute for the killer white stuff. But someone had to lead the way in experimentation. Buying the stuff for the mother-in-law was not enough. The bob had to rejoin the ranks of the baking public that he had been away from too long, cheesecakes excepted.

So when the dr bob cooking team was relieved of the bird prep and supporting players activity for Thanksgiving, and stuck instead with the dessert job, it was only a matter of time before the pie idea came together. Sour cream, on the surface, might seem to defeat the possible health benefits of the other ingredients, but this seemed like the time to try nonfat sour cream in spite of our reservations about possible dangerous chemicals allowing such a product to be faked. Of course interpreting the container ingredient list requires a food expert and these guys are never around when you need them. Yogurt (another super food) might be a better substitute, but its baking with fruit properties were a possibly ruinous unknown factor that we did not need to introduce into the mix at this late time in the T-day countdown. The day before.

Pie crusts were something bob had mastered in his early single days, doing nice woven lattice topped apple pies for a few special occasions. But it had been years since we'd had any hands on experience with pies. Some new kitchen toys were ready: a pretty sleek black Good Grips rolling pin from Oxo and a silicone coated fiberglass Made In France Roll'Pat counter pastry mat that allows "dough to be rolled out effortlessly". Effortlessly that is, unless you absentmindedly approach this task without any recent experience.

After deliberating on the two whole wheat pastry dough recipes at the Bob's Red Mill [website](#) for

some time, bob discovers a much simpler no-frills recipe right on the package as he prepares to execute the dough prep step. But one recipe on the website said something about refrigerating for 12 hours first, and having already learned the refrigeration trick in earlier times, this seemed like a good way to get that out of the way the night before. Unfortunately the little part about letting it sit an hour after removing from the fridge escaped bob's attention. The bottom crust was pretty stiff and seemed a bit hesitant to roll out easily like the hype said, but persistence got it out to the required diameter. However, no quick release! It had to be peeled off tediously, which it allowed without actually breaking although a few really sticky spots thinned out the dough as it pulled away. Meanwhile a cell phone spouse check from ani allows her to remind bob about room temperature dough, so he gets the brilliant idea of a brief microwave defrost cycle to warm up the top crust dough a bit. Fatal error, almost. The dough turned into superglue, so the rolling pin was useless. Not one to give up, bob simply presses it out with his hands. He's planning a lattice top anyway, so it doesn't have to be perfect. Indeed it is far from perfect since this one tears up in the peeling process. Not to worry. Carving out almost strip-like segments with the parmigiano cheese wedge tool, and giving up the weave complication, a jagged lattice top manages to get laid down in bits and pieces. The result looks great! Never admit defeat as long as there is hope for an alternative exit strategy. In the kitchen that is.

The filling required some web surfing to figure out how to marry the super food combo with sour cream apple pie. Eventually one from Epicurious that is actually in a cookbook in our library suggests itself as good start together with the adjustments from the other recipes that had popped up. Seems to work out okay. But the crust clearly needs some practice and maybe some modification. Not as flaky as advertised. But as ani suggested and bob initially rejected, warming your slice 30 seconds in the microwave before slapping on the ice cream is a good idea.

ingredients

flaky whole wheat pastry dough [or substitute your favorite less problematic dough]

- 2 c Bob's Red Mill organic whole wheat pastry flour
- 1 t sea salt
- 3/4 c unsalted butter, chilled (1.5 butter sticks = 12oz)
- 5 to 8 T ice water

filling dry stuff

- 3 T flour, whole wheat pastry flour if you are brave
- 1/3 c sugar in the raw
- 1/4 t salt.

filling wet stuff

- 1 c nonfat sour cream, full fat sour cream or plain nonfat yogurt
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 t vanilla extract.

filling fruits and nuts

- 5 Granny Smith apples, halved, cored, skinned and food processed with the slicer blade
- 1 lemon, juice of
- 1 c dried blueberries
- 1 c walnut baking pieces (finely chopped size)

facilitator

- vegetable oil spray

instructions

1. Start with the dough prep. Sift the flour and salt into a large bowl.
2. Cut the frozen butter sticks into 1/8 in thick slices if you keep your extra in the freezer like we do. If not cut your refrigerated butter sticks into 1/8 in thick slices. A good sturdy bread knife will do this job nicely in the first case. Many knives will fill the bill in the second.
3. Dump the butter slices into the dry stuff and tediously cut it up with a pastry tool for working chilled butter or other fats into flour. What is that called? You can stop when the result resembles a coarse meal with pea-sized lumps.
4. Then add 2 T of water and begin working the dough together a bit still with the pastry tool, then adding a T of water at a time until it looks like it might be on the verge of allowing a dough ball to form. Proceed carefully with both hands kneading it into shape so that the water fat and flour come together and form into a dough ball.
5. Cut into two pieces and flatten out into disk shapes. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 30 minutes.
6. Remove from fridge and let sit 30 minutes.
7. Then attack with your favorite method for rolling out the bottom pie crust.
8. If successful try to release from your working surface and transfer to the 9 or 10 inch pie plate, sprayed first with cooking spray to help release the crust later on. We use dark glass. Set aside.
9. Prepare the apples and dump them into another large bowl and mix them up with the juice of one lemon with your hands just for good measure. The food processor tip came from user feedback at the [Epicurious](#) web site. It makes the apple slices uniformly thin for thorough cooking and saves the extra work of slicing them up by hand.
10. Dump the filling dry stuff into still another large bowl, or maybe the same large bowl as above if you are a fanatic about cleaning during the creative process. Bob is not. Ani is.
11. Combine all the other filling wet stuff and dump in the apples and dried blueberries and mix up well.
12. Pour into the bottom pie crust working the apple slices into more efficient stacking patterns with your hands, leveling off the contents.
13. Sprinkle the walnut pieces over the top and spread around with your hands. Pat down nicely.
14. Roll out the second crust and if brave, do a lattice top. Good luck.
15. Bake in a 350° F oven for about 45 minutes with four strips of aluminum foil protecting the edge crust. Then remove the strips and continue baking another 10 minutes or so, and if your whole wheat crust still looks like it is not ready, turn up the heat to 425° F and finish it off for another 10 minutes. Watch it though. No need to screw up your end product because of carelessness at the last step.
16. Remove and cool, then refrigerate. Remember this has egg and sour cream inside, so even if you might think about leaving some pie types out at room temperature for extended periods, this one should be stored in the fridge.
17. Serve with vanilla or almost vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt, no excuses. For our mandatory topping, we made our usual homemade ice cream recipe using 1 T of tiramisu liqueur as the flavoring, reminiscent of an old Ben and Jerry's White Russian flavor (we subbed the Kalua at the last minute with the more complex coffee-plus-extras flavoring in our last almost finished tiramisu bottle).

notes

1. [SuperFoods Rx](#), Steven Pratt, M.D. and Kathy Matthews, William Morrow Publishers, 2004.
2. [Stoneridge Orchards](#) Whole Dried Blueberries. Convenient 14oz resealable zip-lock bag. Under 8 bucks at [Costco](#) nationwide in fall 2004, but later disappeared. But once aware of the existence of this category of product, the cooking team immediately spotted it at Trader Joe's as a regular item under the generic Trader Joe label. What a jewel that chain is!
3. [Trader Joe's](#) California Walnut Baking Pieces. Convenient 16 oz resealable zip-lock bag. Reasonable.
4. [Bob's Red Mill](#) whole grain products. Like the flax meal we inject into our oatmeal.
5. [Oxo Good Grips rolling pin](#).
6. World Cuisine [Roll'Pat counter pastry mat](#).
7. [Illustrations](#) available.

scabwpie.htm: 30-jan-2005 [[what, ME cook?](#) © 1984 [dr bob enterprises](#)]

not quite barley risotto

The original intention was a low rice / high veggie ratio risotto to fit into our new low carb guidelines, but ani vetoed the rice before starting her sorely needed after-work nap. Okay, bob thinks to himself, why not try bulgur as a substitute for the arborio, a pretty white (= refined and therefore perhaps less desirable nutritionally) rice, and after all, one often sees barley "risotto" in food mags, and big bulgur looks like pearl barley, but it is healthier (we think). Sure enough there was an untouched (but also unmarked) plastic bag of the pearl barley look-alike in the pantry, so the experiment was set. Except it turned out to be whole wheat kernels instead as determined by our middle eastern grain expert after bob woke her up to eat the completely prepared dinner he'd whipped up during her sleep time. Whole wheat kernels don't seem to have their own distinct short name, but are apparently closely related to bulgur but less processed (no cracking), hence better? They are used in making the very tasty Armenian porridge-like slop called [herriseh](#), one of our earlier recipes from the post Y2K year where the distinction between uncooked "shelled wheat" and cooked "cracked wheat" (=bulgur) had already been recorded and forgotten by bob.

It turned out pretty tasty with the shelled wheat, which ani noted were still "al dente", an observation bob missed in his enthusiasm, perhaps resulting from trying to fake the cooking time from bulgur recipes which already has a head start from pre-cooking. We'll try something similar again with bulgur. Pearl barley would also be an acceptable substitute. We've gotta do something since the recent reduction on risotto production in our daily cuisine has left a big hole, and bulgur can certainly be expanded out of its narrow range of pilaf recipes in traditional Armenian cooking to fill the gap.

We'd picked up a bag each of baby spinach and baby arugula the day before, and some white mushrooms and roasted red peppers to add to the mix of a colorful dish. We ultimately decided to do the spinach as a side dish, quickly wilted in a pot with a bit of water and then sautéed with olive oil and a half clove of garlic, while tossing in a cup or so of the arugula into the "risotto" towards the end. For protein, a couple of thin flat John Dory fish filets fresh from the local farmer's market, salt and peppered, then a few minutes for each side on a grill pan, with a bit of lemon squeezed over the second side. The three dishes came together quickly for a tasty nutritious home-cooked meal, totally from scratch. With minimal packaging to contribute to America's burgeoning landfills. What more can you ask?

This recipe was done for a two person big/little portion division (bob/ani), one helping, no leftovers. Doubling the ingredients, except perhaps the olive oil, would be a more natural recipe size.

ingredients

basic grain starter

2 T olive oil

1/2 onion, finely chopped

1/2 c shelled wheat, cracked wheat = bulgur large cut, or pearl barley (for which the recipe name must then be modified)

salt and pepper to taste

1.5 c boiling water (use a teapot) plus 1 t veggie broth paste

mushroom prep

1 T butter

1 T olive oil

4 medium white mushrooms, brushed and chopped

flavor and color additives

1/4–1/2 one roasted red pepper, diced

1 c (roughly) of (prewashed) baby arugula

Middle Eastern red pepper powder to taste, or substitute hot paprika, or paprika plus a dash of cayenne.

instructions

1. This is a standard risotto exercise, except with appropriately varied cooking time (longer for shelled wheat, perhaps shorter for barley) for the rice substitute. Start some water boiling in a teapot.
2. Sauté the onion in olive oil until softened in a flat bottomed nonstick pot.
3. Stir in the "not rice" and let it absorb the oil and onion flavor for a minute.
4. Combine boiling water plus concentrated veggie broth together in a glass measuring thing and pour into the pot.
5. Meanwhile having pre-prepped the mushrooms quickly, sauté them for a few minutes until they look right (judgment call) and toss them in with the quickly diced roasted red pepper and red pepper powder of your choice.
6. Let simmer for 20 to 30 minutes (30 for the shelled wheat, 20 or less for the others).
7. Do the al dente test, but make sure the kernels are not chewy. No problem cooking these past some magic moment. It's not pasta.

notes

1. Feel free to be creative in changing the ingredient lineup. The main idea is to use a more complex carb in place of the traditional arborio.
2. [Illustrations](#) available.

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