Risi e Bisi Revisited: Farro and Spring Pea Soup

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Risi e Bisi is an old Veneto dish made with rice and fresh peas, and depending on whose recipe you are following it can be a soup, a risotto or a kind of warm rice and pea salad. It's the heart of fresh pea season and I like rice, don't ge me wrong, but I really like farro and since I had a load of fresh peas in the house, it seemed like a natural idea to riff off the ol' risi e bisi.

Mostly, I just like to say risi e bisi (ree-cee eh bee-see) and if said properly my cat is highly amused.

This is a soup version that takes advantage of delicious, sweet, fresh, spring peas. The hard part is shelling them and not eating theim as you shell. Sort of like raspberry picking, two for me, one for the bowl.

1 cup of farro (you could also use barley)

1 1/2 cup fresh peas, not the shells, just the peas

3-4 cups good chicken stock or vegetable stock

1 carrot, finely chopped

2 ribs of celery, finely chopped

1 small onin, yes, finely chopped

1-2 T heavy cream to finish

olive oil, salt, pepper

In a ceramic pot, or heavy saucepan, gentle saute in a small bit of olive oil, the carrots, onion and celery until they are soft and relaxed. Add your chicken stock and bring to a boil.

While its coming up to a boil, shell the peas. You'll have to figure out how much you need because I have no idea how many peas you'll eat before you cook them.

Shelling peas is sort of mindless work, so this is a good time to start singing 'risi e bisi' in falsetto and entertaining the cat or annoying the dog.

Bring the stock and the vegetables up to a low simmer and add the farro. Let cook until the farro is soft, about 20 minutes. And unless you are one slow pea shucker, all your peas will be sitting in a bowl ready for the soup. Add the peas and let simmer for 1-2 minutes. If your peas are fresh, that is all it will take. If you have not so fresh peas, it will take longer, if the peas in the market look like they've seen better days, use

frozen peas. Add 1-2 T heavy cream to add a little smoothness to the soup and you are good to go.

Perfect spring soup.

We had ours with a little rose wine at lunch and I have to say that worked very well!

Image (optional):

Bisi-e-bisi-revisited-farro-and-spring-pea-soup