

chicken-wild rice soup with butternut squash and pecans 6-8 servings

- 1 cup wild rice
- 1 tablespoon each butter and olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups diced onions
- 2 cups diced celery
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1 cup diced butternut squash
- Kosher salt, fresh ground black pepper, and crushed red pepper
- 3 tablespoons chopped mixed fresh herbs: sage, rosemary, and thyme (or 2 teaspoons mixed dried — can substitute Herbes de Provence)
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 5-6 chicken thighs, boneless and skinless, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 quarts chicken stock
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup whole milk or half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons sherry
- 1/2 cup chopped, toasted pecans (toast in small skillet on low for 5 minutes)
- 1 cup sautéed mushrooms, optional

Add wild rice to a medium bowl and cover with water. Swish well with hands to clean; drain. Repeat two more times. Set drained rice aside.

In a large pot, heat oil and butter over medium heat and add onions, celery, carrots, butternut squash, 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, a generous pinch (1/8 teaspoon) crushed red pepper, the fresh herbs, and the chicken. Let cook 10 minutes, stirring regularly, or until vegetables are softened and the chicken is browning nicely.

Add garlic and cook until chicken is cooked through. Season again with a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Pour in white wine and simmer another two minutes or so, stirring.

Stir in broth and water, raise heat, cover, and bring to a boil. When boiling, add clean, drained wild rice, lower heat to a

simmer, and cook 45 minutes or until rice is tender and beginning to split at edges. Lower heat so that soup is no longer simmering and add milk or half-and-half and sherry. Stir in mushrooms, if using. Do not boil. Taste, re-season, and serve hot garnished with toasted pecans.

Cook's Note: Lovely with homemade biscuits

WINE: A buttery, big California Chardonnay would be my first choice, but a light Pinot Noir would also be lovely with all the earthy flavors.

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