



PHOTOS BY ©ANTHONY PRUDENCIO (2)

No discussion on Philippine cuisine will be complete without Chef Margarita "Gaita" Forés. After all, Chef Gaita is a doyenne of the culinary arts. If there is a word to describe her career, that word would be "stellar."

Her talent is immense, garnering numerous accolades, including Asia's best female chef 2016. The award is bestowed by an influential group of over 300 leaders in the restaurant industry across Asia selected for their expert opinion of Asia's restaurant scene and of chefs such as Chef Gaita, who have earned the respect of the critics and peers through their skills, entrepreneurial spirit, and artistry.

Chef Gaita is a champion of Philippine ingredients, including the heirloom rice varieties of the Cordilleras. In fact, she graciously shared two recipes featured in the 2016 heirloom rice recipe calendar including the one presented here on risotto carbonara using Innawi rice from Banaue, Ifugao.

Her love affair with heirloom rice started in 2011 when she participated in the Asian culinary forum in California to showcase recipes in *Kulinarya: a guidebook to Philippine cuisine*. Since then, she has been passionately promoting

these varieties through her cuisines and in various events such as Madrid Fusion. Thanks to her efforts, the heirloom rice varieties of the Cordilleras are getting much-deserved global recognition. ■



PHOTO BY ©MARC NICDAO



Risotto

Ingredients

- 10 grams white onion, minced
- 30 grams butter, divided
- ½ cup Innawi (heirloom rice)
- 5 ml white wine
- 3 cups vegetable stock, warm and divided
- 50 ml cooking cream
- 30 grams freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 50 grams bacon, crisp fried and chopped
- cured egg (*see recipe*)
- shaved Parmesan cheese, to finish pansit-pansitan (*Peperomia pellucida*) to garnish

Preparation

1. In a pan over medium heat, sauté onion in 15 grams butter. When onion is soft and translucent, add the Innawi.
2. Lightly toast the rice then deglaze with white wine. Once alcohol has evaporated, pour 1 cup vegetable stock, then simmer and stir.

Continue adding stock until the rice is cooked through.

3. Add cream, cheese, and remaining butter. Stir well. Adjust seasoning.
4. Transfer to plate. Top with fried bacon and cured egg. Garnish with shaved Parmesan cheese and pansit-pansitan. Serve.

Cured egg

Ingredients

- 25 grams rock salt
- 25 grams white sugar
- 1 egg yolk

Preparation

1. In a flat container, combine rock salt and white sugar. Stir.
2. Cradle the yolk in the middle then cover with mixture.
3. Cover and set in a cool, dry place. Cure for 12 hours.



PHOTOS BY ©MARC NICDAO (2)

Bon appétit!

See a video in which Chef Gaita talks about her experience with heirloom rice: <https://youtu.be/5VTk6v7X6Fc>.