

# Barley Risotto with Marinated Feta

by Yotam Ottolenghi

Serves 4

3 tbsp olive oil, plus an extra trickle at the end  
2 whole heads garlic, cloves separated, peeled and quartered  
1 3/4 pounds fresh tomatoes, peeled and chopped  
7 ounces passata\*  
1/2 tsp smoky paprika  
1/8 tsp dried chili flakes  
1 tbsp picked thyme  
6 to 8 strips fresh lemon zest  
1 1/2 tsp caster sugar  
1 tsp salt  
10 ounces pearl barley, well rinsed in cold water and drained  
3/4-1 cup water + the juice of one lemon  
2 tbsp chopped coriander leaves, plus extra to garnish  
Black pepper  
3/4 cup feta, crumbled roughly

Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a medium-sized saucepan and sauté the garlic quarters for about two minutes, or until golden.

Add the tomatoes, passata, paprika, chili, thyme, lemon zest, sugar, salt, barley and a ladleful of water; stir and bring the mix to a simmer. Cook over minimal heat for 50-60 minutes, until the barley is tender but still firm to the bite. You'll need to stir it from time to time, so it doesn't stick to the pan, and add water with the lemon juice occasionally, making sure there is always just enough liquid left in the pot to cook the barley.

At the end of the cooking, the mix should be runny enough to easily to spoon into bowls.

Once done, remove the pan from the heat, stir in the coriander and some freshly ground black pepper. Add most of the feta, stir gently so the cheese doesn't break up too much and stays in largish chunks, taste and adjust the seasoning accordingly.

Spoon into serving bowls, sprinkle with the reserved feta and coriander, and drizzle over a little olive oil.

Chef's Note: If you can't find passata, use crushed tomatoes, but run them through a sieve or food mill to make them smoother and remove the seeds.