



SIMPLY DELICIOUS

Acquerello

THE MULTI-MICHELIN-starred chef Heston Blumenthal rarely puts his name behind specific food brands. But the carnaroli rice made by Acquerello is one he recommends for the perfect risotto. “The result was a rice that cooked slowly and swelled more,” he says, “giving an amazing al dente texture.” French chef Alain Ducasse agrees, describing Acquerello’s rice as one of the culinary world’s only “necessary luxuries”, and writing: “*Acquerello de Rondolino – la Rolls-Royce du riz.*” And Massimo Bottura, whose three-Michelin-starred Osteria Francescana in Modena topped *Restaurant* magazine’s list of “The World’s 50 Best Restaurants” in 2016, has also praised Acquerello.

“Every grain of this rice is perfect,” says Piero Rondolino, the founder of the company that makes Acquerello rice. “We have a grain that is hugely consistent, very absorbent and extremely tasty. It looks good, has a good bite and you can distinguish every grain. They don’t stick, they stay individual, big and consistent.”

At the foot of the Alps, surrounded by shining fields and golden rice ears, stands Tenuta Colombara, the home of Acquerello rice. These 140 hectares of Piedmont, in the rice capital of Europe, have been owned by three generations of the Rondolino family and now, each year, witness the complex cycle which creates Acquerello rice.

Chefs serving the world’s heads of state – like Mark Flanagan, chef to Queen Elizabeth II, and Cristeta Comerford, chef at the White House – visited the Tenuta Colombara to learn Acquerello’s secrets, and became Acquerello’s ambassadors. One reason

why Michelin-starred chefs love Acquerello is because it is the only rice in the world that is aged, for up to seven years, and restored with its precious rice germ. Each grain is thus rich in the minerals and vitamins usually only found in brown rice. This unique restoration process – created 26 years ago by Piero – has been awarded an international patent.

After harvest in autumn, the grains are subjected to an aging process that stabilises the starch, ensuring the rice does not become mushy. Next comes milling, which turns the rough brown rice into fine white rice. “Every single grain goes through a very complex process that has 20 steps,” says Piero. “It changes the rice very gently from brown to white, without fracturing or breaking the grain.” Next comes selection, with only the perfect grains making the cut. “If you open our tins, every grain is exactly the same,” says Piero. “The same colour, size and shape.”

That’s how you get what experts consider to be the world’s finest risotto rice. Best of all, you don’t have to be a Michelin-starred chef to appreciate it. While traditional risotto recipes can be laborious, requiring constant stirring and a large amount of stock, Rondolino rice can be transformed into risotto in a few minutes.

“It is simple,” says Piero. “You take our tins of rice, boil for 10 minutes in water, and then add the best olive oil and Parmesan – do that, and you will have an amazing flavour and texture straight away. Our rice takes two years to perfect, but you can use it to create the best risotto in 10 minutes.” — www.acquerello.it