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THE **L.A.**  
COOKBOOK

RECIPES FROM THE BEST  
RESTAURANTS, BAKERIES, AND BARS  
IN LOS ANGELES

RIZZOLI  
NEW YORK





## Valerie Confections / "Fallen Fruit" Cake

When it comes to showpiece cakes in Los Angeles, Valerie Gordon tops the short list. At first, she was connecting with the spirit of famed L.A. landmarks such as the Scandia apple cake and the Brown Derby grapefruit cake. Now, tomorrow's classics is her thing. This gorgeous layer cake is her elegant offering for your next special occasion: "Fallen Fruit," a moist vanilla cake cushioned with petal-pink raspberry buttercream and ripe berries and figs, all covered with more fresh buttercream (this time, lemon!) and even more fruit.

For the most even results, bake the layers individually. You can prep and refrigerate the buttercream up to a week ahead of time. Don't worry if it becomes hard as a rock. When you're ready to finish the cake, allow the chilled buttercream to rest at room temperature for a half hour, then place it into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat until light and fluffy. For three layers (or more), make an additional half-portion of the batter for each tier added and double the buttercream in order to completely enrobe the finished cake. Tailor the "fallen" fruit to your preference or the season.

### SERVES 8 TO 10

#### VANILLA CAKE

**3¼ cups (16¼ ounces) cake flour**

**¾ teaspoon (5¼ grams) baking powder**

**1 teaspoon (3 grams) Diamond Crystal kosher salt**

**1½ cups plus 6 tablespoons (3¾ sticks) butter**

**2 tablespoons corn syrup**

**2 cups (14 ounces) granulated sugar**

**6 eggs**

**¼ cup (2 ounces) crème fraîche or sour cream**

**2 tablespoons vanilla paste**

#### LEMON AND RASPBERRY BUTTERCREAM

**3 cups (6 sticks / 24 ounces) butter**

**1½ cups (6¾ ounces) powdered sugar**

**¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 ounces) light corn syrup**

**1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract**

**2 tablespoons lemon juice**

**Pinch of salt**

**12 ounces white chocolate, melted and cooled**

**⅔ cup (6 ounces) raspberry jam**

To make the vanilla cake: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Trace and cut out circles of parchment to fit two 9 by 3-inch round cake pans. Coat the bottom and sides with nonstick spray or butter, then line with the parchment.

Into a medium bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter, corn syrup, and granulated sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy. Stop and scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk the eggs, crème fraîche, and vanilla paste until well incorporated. With the mixer running on medium speed, pour the egg mixture into the creamed butter and beat until smooth.

Working in ½-cup increments, add the dry ingredients, mixing for about 30 seconds after each addition. Beat the batter until fully incorporated and smooth, stopping to scrape down the bowl as necessary.

Divide the batter equally between the cake pans and smooth the tops. Put one cake in the oven and bake for 20 minutes, then rotate and bake for 20 to 25 minutes more, until firm to the touch, matte in finish, the sides begin to pull away from the pan, and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let cool completely. Repeat with the second cake.

CONTINUED

## “Fallen Fruit” Cake

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### TO ASSEMBLE

**3½ cups assorted berries, stemmed**

**1 pint small plums**

**1 pint assorted figs, grapes, and currants**

**1 pint kumquats, mandarinquats, or small seasonal citrus fruits**

Meanwhile, to make the lemon and raspberry buttercream: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter on medium to medium-high speed until very soft and creamy. Stop and scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl, then beat for 1 minute more. In small increments, add the powdered sugar and look for a very light consistency before streaming in the corn syrup, vanilla, and lemon juice. Beat for 2 minutes more. Reduce the speed to low. Slowly pour in the melted white chocolate. Add the pinch of salt and stir until the buttercream is fluffy and shiny. Transfer to a separate bowl. Return 2 cups of the buttercream to the stand mixer bowl; cover and refrigerate the remainder.

With the mixer running on medium speed, beat the 2 cups buttercream with the jam until uniformly pink (no white streaks), about 2 minutes.

To assemble: Remove the cooled cakes from the pans. Place one cake upside-down on a turntable, if you have one. Evenly spread with 1 cup of the raspberry buttercream. Cover the buttercream with 1½ cups berries, then top with the remaining raspberry buttercream. Set the second cake, right side up, directly on top of the buttercream-and-berries layer. Press gently to adhere.

Using a large offset spatula, coat the entire cake with a thin layer of the reserved lemon buttercream, and chill to stiffen slightly, 30 minutes (this is your crumb coat). Using the back of a wooden spoon, thickly frost the top and sides of the cake with additional lemon buttercream, finishing with bold strokes.

To serve: Place the cake on a cake stand or dessert tray. Arrange the heavier fruit, such as plums, figs, or grapes in the center of the cake and around the base. By the handful, gently drop lighter fruits, such as currants, berries, and small citrus, over the cake so they mound on top and tumble down the sides.



# RISOTTO & BEYOND

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100 Authentic Italian Rice Recipes for Antipasti, Soups,  
Salads, Risotti, One-Dish Meals, and Desserts



**JOHN COLETTA**

WITH NANCY ROSS RYAN AND MONICA KASS ROGERS

*RIZZOLI*  
NEW YORK







# Risotto with Sea Scallops and Peas

## RISOTTO ALLE CAPESANTE E PISELLI

The sweetly elegant combination of fresh green peas and soft white sea scallops makes this a celebratory Venetian risotto. In the best Italian seafood risotto tradition, use Vialone Nano, a *semifino* rice that I like for its ability to absorb liquid so well, making for a very creamy risotto. If fresh English peas (sometimes called “sweet peas”) are unavailable, substitute very-best-quality frozen green peas, thawed and unblanched. Ensure the sea scallops you purchase are scrupulously fresh: They will be sliced very thin, and served raw over the cooked risotto.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

**WINE PAIRING:** Sicilian Carricante—the “dry Riesling of Sicily”—is mineral-driven, high-acid, and relatively light-weight with delicious green pear and chamomile flavors; perfect for the sweet scallops and fresh peas. Make sure you find a young, unoaked example.

2½ cups fresh shelled garden peas (English) or frozen, thawed green peas

### FOR THE PEA PESTO

Finely grated zest of 2 lemons

⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil

½ teaspoon finely ground sea salt

½ teaspoon finely ground white pepper

### FOR THE RISOTTO

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 slice medium white or yellow onion, finely chopped to make ¼ cup

½ teaspoon finely ground sea salt, plus more as needed

½ teaspoon finely ground white pepper, plus more as needed

1¼ cups Vialone Nano *semifino* rice

⅓ cup dry Italian white wine

4 tablespoons (½ cup) cold unsalted butter

6 large sea scallops, sliced into paper-thin rounds

**BLANCH THE PEAS:** In a medium heavy-gauge saucepan or pot, bring 6 cups water to a boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat to maintain a slow simmer. Place the peas in a mesh strainer; immerse in the simmering water to blanch for 1 minute; transfer to a bowl. Leave the water at a very slow simmer.

**MAKE THE PEA PESTO:** Place 2 cups of the blanched peas in the work bowl of a food processor with the lemon zest, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Pulse until pureed into a creamy paste. Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate until ready to use.

**MAKE THE RISOTTO:** In a medium heavy-gauge sauté pan or skillet at least 3 inches deep (with lid handy) warm the olive oil over low heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until the onion is translucent but not browned. It’s okay to add 2 tablespoons water to help

the onion soften without browning, just be sure the water has evaporated before moving to the next step. Season with the salt and pepper. Add the rice and stir for 2 minutes, until the kernels are well coated. Pour in the wine, stirring until completely evaporated. Ladle  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the simmering water from blanching the peas into the rice and cook, stirring continuously, until reduced by two thirds. Add another ladleful, again stirring until the cooking water has reduced by two thirds. Repeat the process until most of the water has been incorporated and the rice kernels are tender, but not mushy, with a creamy consistency. (You may have as much as a cup of water left unused.) When stirred, the rice should move across the pan in a slow wave (*allonda*). This should take about 14 minutes from the time you begin ladling the water into the rice.

Remove the risotto from the heat. Stir in  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup pea pesto and the remaining blanched peas; reserve any remaining pesto for another use. Cover for 2 minutes. Stir in the butter until creamy. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon the risotto into a serving bowl or individual dishes. Top with the sliced sea scallops. Drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with a bit of finely ground white pepper. Serve immediately.





# Rice Pudding with Peaches

## BUDINO DI RISO CON COMPOSTA DI PESCHE

The sweet-sour (*agrodolce*) combination of vinegar with fruit and sugar is an Italian classic. The mascarpone-enriched custard and the inclusion of both sweet and savory spices in the rice are, too. Because the traditional recipe for this beautiful dolce is almost baroque, with challenging preparation steps and methods, I simplified it considerably. The one thing that could not change was the rice: *Superfino* Rosso Integrale is a very aromatic fragrant whole-grain brown rice that is milled in such a way as to leave a part of its husk intact. When cooked it has an incomparable texture and flavor. You can source this rice, and Italian white wine vinegar, online or from purveyors of specialty Italian food products. **MAKES 8 SERVINGS**

**WINE PAIRING:** A Moscato Dolce from the Piedmont, with its balanced acid and sugar and a boatload of perfumy peach notes, is a great way to show off this peachy dessert.

### FOR THE RICE PUDDING

¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon  
granulated sugar

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons Rosso  
Integrale *superfino* rice

½ vanilla bean, seeds scraped,  
pod included

½ teaspoon ground allspice

1 bay leaf, preferably fresh

### FOR THE PEACH COMPOTE

1 cup granulated sugar

½ cup freshly squeezed orange  
juice

¼ cup Italian white wine  
vinegar

Finely grated zest of 1 lemon

6 ripe peaches, halved and  
pitted (see notes)

### FOR THE CUSTARD

3 egg yolks, beaten

3 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons dry Italian  
white wine

4 ounces mascarpone cheese  
(½ cup)

### FOR FINISHING

1 envelope unflavored  
granulated gelatin (2½  
teaspoons), softened in  
½ cup cool water

3 pasteurized egg whites, or  
equivalent of pasteurized liquid  
egg-white product, at room  
temperature (see notes)

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

¼ cup confectioners' sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**MAKE THE RICE FOR THE PUDDING:** In a medium heavy-gauge saucepan or pot, combine 4¼ cups water, the granulated sugar, rice, vanilla bean seeds and pod, allspice, and bay leaf. Heat to boiling over medium heat, stirring frequently. Lower the heat, cover the pot, and simmer until the rice is cooked through and tender, about 55 minutes. If too much liquid remains, remove the lid and cook, stirring, until the rice is the texture of thick soup. Remove the pot from the heat. Cover to keep hot and set aside.

**MAKE THE PEACH COMPOTE:** While the rice is cooking, in another medium heavy-gauge saucepan or pot, combine the granulated sugar, orange juice, vinegar, and lemon zest. Heat