



## Barley's Version

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By Catherine Caldwell and John Gilchrist, Calgary Herald



John Gilchrist recreates the amazing barley risotto he discovered in Scotland.

Photographed by:

Dean Bicknell, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

We both have a fondness for barley. Why we don't eat more remains a mystery. Sure, we have a couple of bags of the pearl and pot varieties (see spotlight) in our pantry. But aside from occasionally throwing some in a soup or stew, we too often ignore the grain.

Even though, according to the Alberta Barley Commission, Canada is the world's second largest barley producer, and Alberta produces about half of the country's barley crop. (Most of that crop, though, goes to feed cattle and pigs or to brew beer. Very little ends up on our tables.)

On a recent trip to the county of Perth in central Scotland, however, we ran into a plate of barley that stopped us dead in our tracks.

Prepared by chef Lee Patrick at The Inn on the Tay in Grandtully ([theinnonthetay.co.uk](http://theinnonthetay.co.uk)), pearl barley had been slowly melded into a risotto using a lamb broth and then topped with grilled lamb loin chops. A simple and savoury dish, creamed with a little cheddar and highlighted by a touch of shallot and garlic, it was seriously equal to or better than most rice risottos we've had.

Patrick is English, London trained and tested by famed British chef/restaurateur Marco Pierre White. But Patrick left the bustle of London and is now cooking at the bucolic Inn on the Tay, owned and operated by the charming and energetic Josie and Geoff Wilson. The lovely six-room country inn sits on the banks of the River Tay, alongside one of the best stretches for canoeing and white-water rafting in Scotland, and is a fine place to enjoy the Scottish countryside and excellent contemporary British cuisine (including Patrick's killer white chocolate-raspberry oatmeal for breakfast).

We recreated Patrick's barley risotto for a recent dinner party, and guests loved it. At first, a few even refused to believe it was barley. It's now become a staple in our household, and we think it would work using beef or chicken stock, too.

We may well have to go buy a few more bags of barley soon.

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### Spotlight

What's the difference between pearl and pot barley? Both are hulled, but pearl barley is the more processed of the two, polished so to speak, into pearls until there is almost no bran left. Pot barley, on the other hand, still has some bran attached and is more nutritious and flavourful. (There is also the most nutritious, but hard-to-find, hulled or whole-grain barley, which still has all the bran attached.)

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