Torta di Riso (Lemony Rice Cake)

ACTIVE TIME: 45 minutes TOTAL TIME: 2 hours
SERVES: 8-10

1 quart whole milk
½ vanilla pod, split and scraped
Rind plus juice of 1 lemon or orange, plus finely grated zest for garnish (optional)
1⅓ cups granulated sugar
1¼ cups Arborio rice or Anson Mills Carolina Gold rice
8 large eggs
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract or paste
⅔ cup amaretto or limoncello liqueur, or ½ cup additional lemon juice

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and line a 9-inch spring-form cake pan with parchment paper.
2. Bring milk, vanilla, lemon rind and 1 cup sugar to a boil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and stir in rice. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until rice is al dente and mixture has a creamy consistency, 20-25 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature. Discard vanilla pod and lemon rind.
3. Meanwhile, use an electric mixer with whisk attachment to beat eggs, remaining sugar, vanilla extract and lemon juice until pale yellow and frothy, 12 minutes. Start at a slow speed and once ingredients are combined increase to high speed.
4. Stir some of egg mixture into cooled rice to loosen it. Gently fold in remainder of egg mixture to form a smooth batter. Stir in amaretto and mix well.
5. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake until top is light golden and cake is set, 1 hour. Lightly sprinkle with lemon zest, if you like.
—Adapted from Chris and Francesca Bianco