



## ARANCINI- Italian Rice Balls

### INGREDIENTS:

#### For the rice

- 4 cups (800 grams) arborio rice See
- 6 cups chicken broth
- ⅓ cup (80 grams) salted butter
- large pinch saffron
- 1 teaspoon salt or to taste
- 1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

#### For the meat sauce filling

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ onion finely chopped
- 1 small stick celery finely diced
- ½ carrot finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves finely chopped
- 8 ounces (225 grams) ground beef
- 8 ounces (225 grams) ground pork
- ¾ cup (100 grams) chopped pancetta or bacon
- ¼ cup red wine or add more broth
- 2 cups tomato puree (passata)
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 stalk fresh rosemary (or 1 teaspoon dried rosemary)
- freshly ground pepper
- salt to taste
- ½ cup frozen peas optional

#### To assemble and fry

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk or water

- 1 egg
- 2 cups dried breadcrumbs
- 8 ounces (225 grams) mozzarella cheese cut into ¼” cubes
- Oil for frying light flavored olive oil or avocado oil

## **DIRECTIONS:**

**To prepare the rice (you can cook it the day before, but it must be warmed before forming into the balls.)**

1. If using saffron strands, grind with salt.
2. In a large saucepan, bring to a boil the chicken broth, butter, and saffron/salt mixture (or just salt).
3. When boiling, add the rice, stir and bring back to the boil.
4. Once boiling, reduce heat to the lowest cover with a tight-fitting lid and cook for 15 minutes. Don't be tempted to lift the lid.
5. After the cooking time turn the heat off. Don't lift the lid! Let the rice sit for a further 10 minutes. After this time, you should have perfectly cooked moist rice that clings together well.
6. Turn the rice into a large, flat baking dish and mix in the grated parmesan cheese. Cover with plastic wrap to retain the moisture and allow to cool. Taste and add salt if necessary to your taste. For the rice to stick together to form the balls, it shouldn't be fridge cold.

## **To prepare meat sauce**

1. Heat the oil and add the finely chopped onion, carrot and celery. Saute for a few minutes until softened.
2. Once the vegetables are softened, add the pancetta or bacon, chopped garlic followed by the ground meats. Stir and fry to brown, breaking up the meat well.
3. Add the wine or more broth and allow it to come to a boil. Then add the remaining ingredients except the peas. Bring to a boil, then turn down and simmer slowly for 1 hour until the sauce has thickened and reduced to about 4 cups. Don't forget to taste as you go and adjust the seasoning. If adding frozen peas, stir into the meat sauce 10 minutes before the sauce is done.
4. This recipe needs approximately 2 cups of meat sauce.
5. Not all the meat sauce will be used to fill the Italian Rice Balls. The remaining can be served alongside or freeze the remaining meat sauce for later.

## To assemble and fry

1. The following steps are for forming Italian Rice Balls by hand. An arancini maker or mold can be used. The best ones are the originals that are made in Italy. These come in various sizes and shapes. Depending on the mold you choose, this recipe will make more or less balls.

2. Have the cooled rice, cooled meat sauce, and chopped mozzarella cheese ready for the assembly.

3. If the rice has been prepared in advance and chilled in the fridge, warm in the microwave oven before forming the balls or it will be crumbly and not stick together well. Stir the rice to evenly distribute the heat and add a little more water if it still seems dry.

4. If the rice seems very crumbly (even if just cooked), with a clean hand massage the cooked rice to develop the starch. Don't break the grains of rice. This will make it stickier.

5. Wet your hands – this will make shaping the balls easier. Take about a tablespoon of rice and flatten into your cupped hand. Add a large teaspoonful of meat and cube of cheese. Add a little more rice on top while molding the edges of rice around the filling. Press



together firmly with your other hand cupped over the top and form a ball. Make sure no filling shows. Add more rice if needed. Refrigerate while you prepare the batter.

6. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, water, or milk and egg. It's correct that the batter is thin. Place the breadcrumbs on a large plate. Dip each rice ball into the batter. Use your fingers to ensure batter completely coats each ball. Once all the rice balls are dipped in the batter, roll in breadcrumbs.

7. Refrigerate your rice balls for 30 minutes.

8. Pour light flavored, olive oil into a saucepan or deep fryer (the oil should be at least 2 inches/5cm deep). Heat the oil over medium heat for about 5 minutes to obtain the correct temperature. Drop a cube of bread in and it should sizzle and turn golden in about 15 seconds.

9. Use abundant oil for frying. You don't need a deep fryer to make Sicilian arancini. A large saucepan filled with oil is sufficient. The oil needs to be hot enough to fry and seal the exterior. If it's too cool, the oil will be absorbed. To obtain the correct temperature, heat the oil over medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes—test by dropping a cube of bread in. The oil is ready if it sizzles and turns golden in 15 seconds. Temperature=350

10. Drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot. You can dip it in any leftover meat sauce!