

Arancinette al Ragout di Carne (Little Arancine Stuffed with Meat)

Adapted from Chef Massimo's technique at the Ristorante Luci e Calici in Palermo. Arancinette are ping-pong ball sized, smaller than the typical orange-sized arancine found all over Sicily.

Serves 4 for as a meal or 8 as an appetizer

1 recipe risotto:

1 cup Arborio rice
1 small shallot, peeled and minced
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 pinch saffron threads, soaked in warm water, or 1 pinch saffron powder
2 Tbsp. butter
½ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano
4-5 cups homemade chicken broth, or water, heated to a simmer
Kosher salt, to taste

For the arancine:

4 oz Caciocavallo cheese (substitute fresh mozzarella), cut into ½ inch cubes
5 oz ground beef
1 small onion
3 tsp extra virgin olive oil
4 oz peas, fresh or frozen
4 oz tomato sauce (freshly made)
salt and pepper, to taste
1 ½ cups homemade breadcrumbs
Olive oil or sunflower oil for frying

First, make the risotto.

- Bring broth or water to a simmer and set aside. In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, sauté shallot in olive oil until translucent. Add rice and stir for a few minutes to coat in olive oil. Add broth or water, one cup at a time, and stir continuously until absorbed. Keep adding liquids until the rice is creamy and al dente (chewy but firm).
- Add butter and cheese and stir vigorously. Add salt to taste.
- Chill risotto until ready to make arancine.

Prepare the arancine fillings.

- Cook the peas for 10 minutes in salted water; drain and set aside.
- Sauté the onion with olive oil and add ground beef, salt and pepper.
- Add the tomato sauce and cook at least 20 minutes on medium heat.
- Add the peas to the tomato sauce and let cool.

Form the arancine:

- Wet hands and place rice on palm in a thin layer.
- Make a depression in the center and add a teaspoon of sauce and 2 or 3 cubes of caciocavallo (or mozzarella) cheese.

- Close up the rice to form a ball the size of a walnut. Press the ball to compact with your hands.
- Roll the rice balls in flour, then beaten egg, then breadcrumbs.

Fry the arancine:

- Pour olive or sunflower oil into a heavy, deep saucepan, making sure there's enough oil to accommodate frying about 4 arancine at a time. Heat over medium high heat, and test by placing a small pinch of risotto in the hot oil to see if it sizzles and fries.
- Fry until hot and golden.
- Serve warm.