



# Arancini

## SERVES 25

Many Italians make rice balls from leftover risotto, forming the risotto into small balls around ragu or cheese and deep frying them. In Sicily, the street snack arancini translates as "little orange" for its resemblance to southern Italian oranges. Arancini were invented in Palermo, Sicily, in the Middle Ages by the Normans of Sicily as a quick meal for hunting. In Palermo's Ballaro Market, vendors display platefuls of arancini filled with everything from prosciutto and cheese to ragu and peas. When you make your selection, the balls are dropped into a pot of sizzling oil and fried until they're golden and crispy. I've sampled many varieties of arancini in Palermo and my preference is always those filled with cheese, which is how I make them in my own kitchen. You can use any dried breadcrumbs to coat them, but I like the lighter panko crumbs the best. Instead of recycling risotto, I cook short-grain rice (risotto rice) in water until it's soft and sticky. I also recommend making extra and freezing the uncooked breaded balls. Before frying, allow them to thaw for an hour, then cook an extra minute to ensure the filling gets cooked through.

## INGREDIENTS

2 cups short grain rice (such as arborio)

1 tablespoon salt

8 ounces Italian cheeses for filling (Parmesan, Fontina, Mozzarella, Gorgonzola)

1 teaspoon fresh oregano (or any fresh herb or combination)

3 eggs

1 1/2 cups panko breadcrumbs

1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

1 quart vegetable oil for frying

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## PROCESS:

Bring 4 cups of water to a boil in a saucepan and add the salt. Add the rice and simmer over medium-high heat (don't stir) for 25 to 30 minutes, until soft and sticky. Spread the rice out on baking sheets and spread to cool.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine the cheeses and oregano. To form the balls, moisten your hands with water, then take about 2 teaspoons of rice and flatten it into the palm of your hand. Place a teaspoon of cheese filling on the flattened rice. Top with another teaspoon of rice and form into a ball, enclosing the cheese. Continue with remaining ingredients, forming about 25 rice balls.



In a small bowl, beat the eggs. In another bowl, combine the breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese. Roll each rice ball in egg and then the bread crumb mixture. Place balls on a baking sheet to be ready to fry.

Heat the oil in a deep pan to 375 degrees on a deep-fry thermometer. Carefully place a few balls in the hot oil, but do not crowd. Cook, turning them to brown evenly, for about 3 minutes, until browned on all sides. Remove to a plate lined with paper towels. Repeat with the remaining rice balls. Let cool slightly and serve.

Cooked arancini can be kept warm in 250-degree oven until serving time, up to 1 hour. You can also freeze the uncooked arancini on a baking sheet until frozen, then put into bags to store in the freezer until ready to fry, up to 3 months. Note that frying time will be longer for the frozen balls.