

# Arancini (Fried Risotto Balls)

by Chef Jenn Monaco of Brock & Company

The tasty recipe can be customized with different fillings and served with homemade marinara, fresh basil pesto, or a rustic ragu. Next time you whip up a batch of risotto, save a serving for arancini. They hold perfectly well in the freezer and fry up crispy in less than a minute. Enjoy!

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## INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups arborio rice
- 4 ounces yellow onion, finely diced
- 10 cups lightly salted water or low sodium vegetable stock
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed
- Zest of 1 Lemon
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup freshly-grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 2 ounces fresh mozzarella, cut into twenty  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dices
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup panko breadcrumbs, passed through a sieve
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus more as needed
- Salt, to taste



## RECIPE PREPARATION

- Bring a large pot with the 10 cups of water to a boil, and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Place a saucepan over medium heat and add a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Add the diced onions to the pan and cook until they become tender. When the onions are translucent, add the rice and toast the grains, making sure to coat them with the oil and mixing for 5 minutes. Using a large ladle, add 1 cup of hot water until the rice is just covered, stirring continuously until the water is just above the surface of the rice, keeping the liquid at a consistent boil. Repeat this process until you have added all the water, and the risotto is cooked through.
- When the risotto is al dente, stir in the cubed butter, lemon zest, and grated Parmigiano Reggiano until all ingredients are thoroughly incorporated. Season with salt, to taste. Remove the pan from the heat and spread the risotto on the baking sheet lined with parchment paper to allow it to cool. Once it has cooled, roll portions of the risotto in your hands to form balls of about 4 ounces, and stuff each one with a piece of mozzarella, sealing any holes.
- Coat one risotto ball with the breadcrumbs, then place it back on the baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Repeat this process until all the risotto balls have been coated thoroughly. I don't use flour and egg beforehand, as many recipes do. I have found that if your risotto is moist enough, the crumbs stick perfectly fine without getting clumpy.
- In a large, heavy-bottomed skillet, heat 1 cup of extra virgin olive oil until it is almost smoking. Cook the arancini in the oil until they become golden brown all over. Remove each rice ball to a plate lined with paper towels to drain. Serve warm, topped with a sprinkle of grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

*Arancini—named for the "little oranges" that they resemble exploding with each crunchy, cheese-filled bite. We can thank the ancient Sicilians for this perfect snack; the southern island is known for combining simple ingredients into tasty recipes.*

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