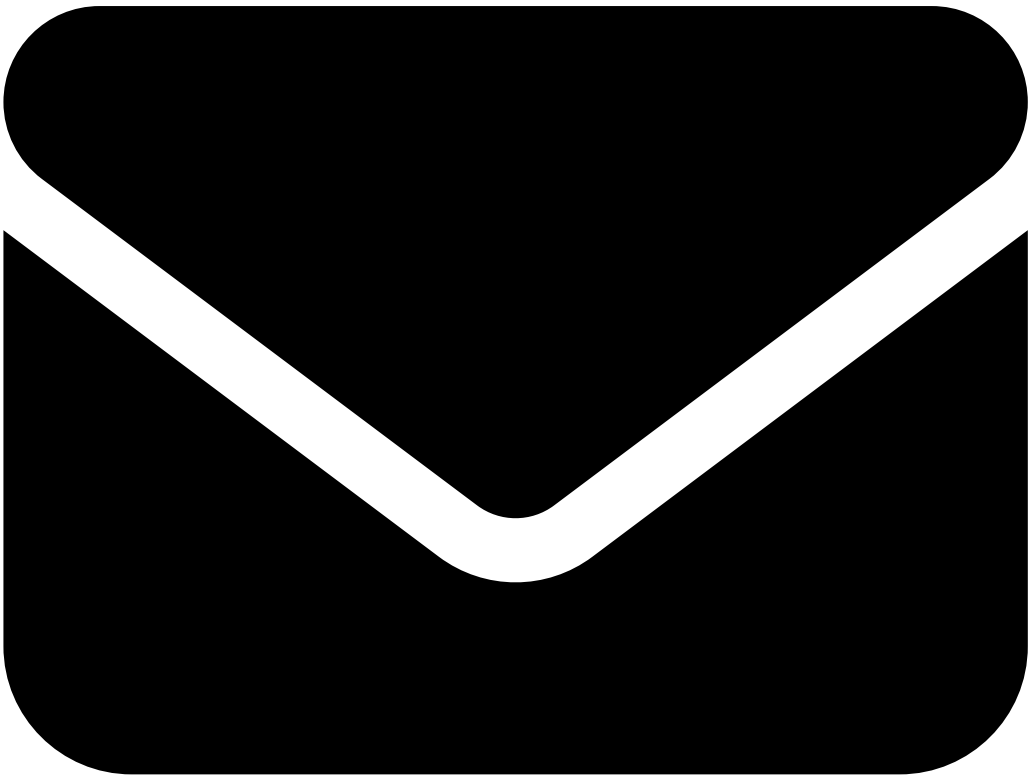
Arancini Italian rice balls

Arancini Italian Rice Balls

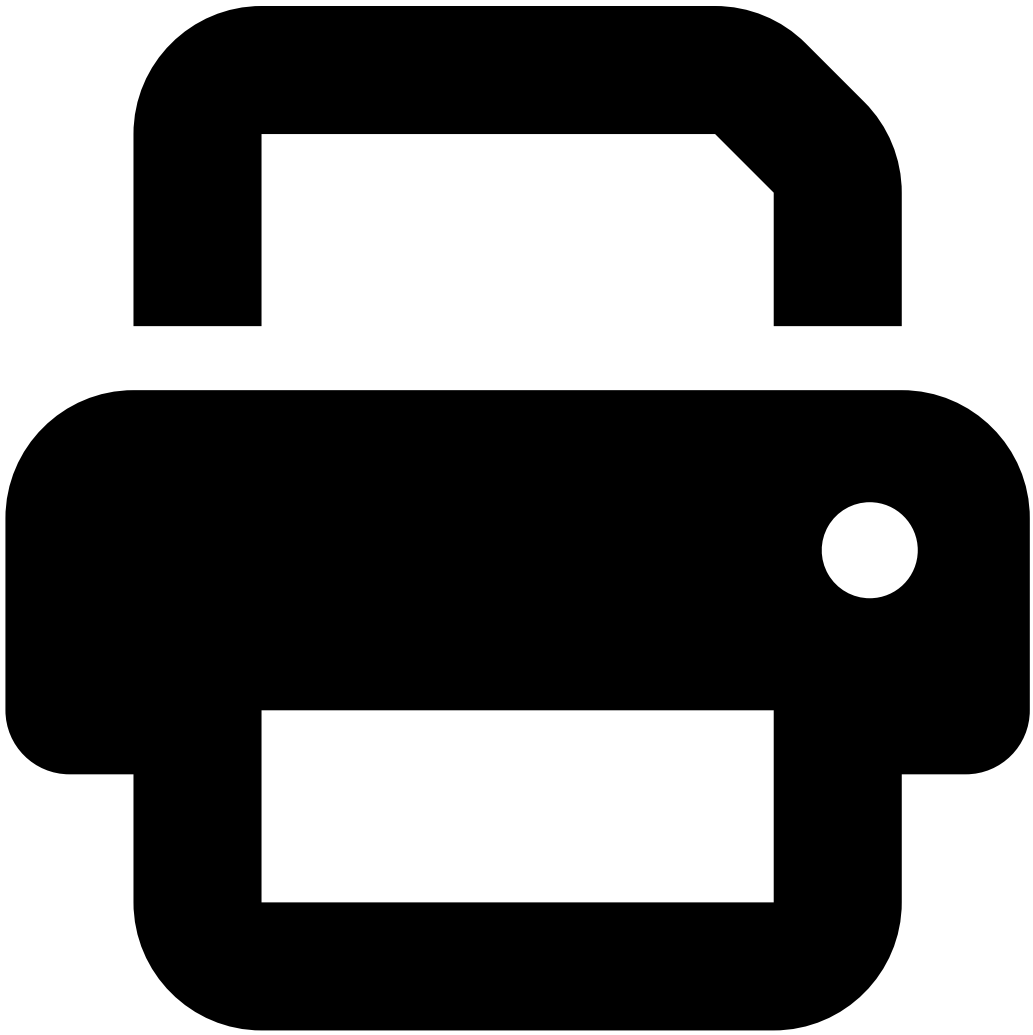
This post may contain affiliate links, that help support this blog. If you make a purchase through these links, I may earn a commission—at no cost to you. For more information read my disclosure policy.








SMS



Golden and crispy on the outside, tender and flavorful on the inside, **Arancini are one of Italy’s most beloved street foods**. These delicious Italian rice balls are filled with a rich, savory meat sauce and creamy mozzarella, then coated and fried until perfectly golden.

The name *arancini* means “little oranges” in Italian, a reference to their round shape and beautiful golden color. While they originated in Sicily, these irresistible rice balls can now be found throughout Italy, with each region putting its own delicious spin on them.

The classic version is filled with meat sauce, peas, and mozzarella, but there are countless variations, from saffron-infused rice to vegetarian fillings and different cheeses. No matter the filling, the appeal is the same: **a crisp, golden exterior giving way to warm, creamy, savory goodness inside.**

Perfect as an appetizer, snack, or part of an Italian-style dinner, arancini are always a crowd-pleaser—and a delicious taste of Italy in every bite.

Arancini: Italian Rice Balls

Making arancini may seem like a project, but with a little preparation, they're much easier than you might think. The key is to make the rice or risotto ahead of time and give yourself a little time to assemble everything before frying.

Steps to Make This Arancini Italian Rice Ball Recipe Easy

Step 1: Prepare the rice.
Make the risotto a day or two ahead and refrigerate it. Cold rice is much easier to work with and helps the arancini hold their shape.

Step 2: Set up your workstation.
When you're ready to make the arancini, have everything prepared and within reach: the chilled risotto, cubed mozzarella, meat filling, seasoned breadcrumbs, and beaten eggs.

Step 3: Shape and bread the arancini.
Take a portion of the rice and gently flatten it in your hand. Add a little meat filling and a cube of mozzarella, then carefully shape the rice around the filling, sealing it completely. Dip each rice ball in beaten egg, then roll it in the breadcrumbs. Place the finished arancini on a parchment-lined baking sheet.

Step 4: Refrigerate until ready to cook.
The arancini can be made several hours ahead, or even the day before. Cover and refrigerate until you're ready to cook them.

Step 5: Fry until golden.

Heat the oil and fry the arancini in batches until they’re beautifully golden and crisp on the outside. Don’t overcrowd the pan, or the oil temperature will drop and the arancini won’t crisp properly.

Short on time? You can also bake the arancini in the oven or cook them in an air fryer for a lighter option.

Serve them **hot, while the outside is crisp and the mozzarella inside is warm and gooey.** That’s when they’re at their best.

Storage

Refrigerator: Store cooked arancini in an airtight container for **up to 3 days**.

Freezer: Freeze cooked or uncooked arancini in a single layer until firm, then transfer to a freezer-safe container for **up to 3 months**. Cooked arancini can be reheated directly in a 375°F oven or air fryer until hot and crisp.

More Italian Appetizers

If you love classic Italian appetizers, try my **Easy Savory Puff Pastry Twists**, **Gorgonzola and Brie Pear Tart**, or my family’s favorite Italian sausage rolls with puffpastery .For more delicious ideas, browse my **Appetizer Recipes**.

Arancini Italian Rice Balls



Crispy, golden Italian rice balls made with creamy seasoned rice, filled with savory cheese and fried or baked until perfectly crisp. Arancini are a classic Italian appetizer and a delicious way to turn leftover risotto into something special.

- 4 cups leftover rice or risotto
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 egg
- 2 Tbsp. chopped Italian parsley

FOR THE MEAT FILLING

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 cup chopped celery + 1 cup peeled and chopped carrot
- 1 cup diced pancetta or bacon
- 1/2 lb. ground beef + 1/2 lb. ground pork
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 2 cups crushed tomatoes
- 2 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 cup water
- 1 Tbsp. dried Italian herbs
- 1 cup peas (optional)
- Ingredients to assemble:
- 4 mozzarella sticks cut into 4 pieces

FOR THE COATING

- 1 egg slightly beaten
- 2 cups breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan
- 1 Tbsp. chopped Italian parsley

1. Mix the cooked rice with 1 egg , 1 cup of grated parmesan cheese and the Italian parsley, salt and pepper to taste. Set aside while preparing the meat filling.

2. To make the meat sauce: Start in 2 Tbsp. of olive oil by cooking the pancetta or bacon until crisp, then add the celery, onion, garlic and carrots and cook until soft . Once the vegetables are soft add the meats and cook until browned breaking up the meat as it cooks.
3. Add the wine and let it evaporate before adding the tomato paste and water. Bring to a boil, then turn down to a simmer cover and cook for one hour. If using peas add them to the meat sauce the last 10 minutes .
4. This recipe uses about 3 cups of meat filling any leftovers can be used for pasta sauce.
5. To assemble and fry; the rice should be warm for easier forming , if the rice has be in the fridge warm in the microwave.
6. Wet your hands this will make forming the rice balls easier. Take about 1 Tbsp. of rice and flatten into your cupped hand. Place 1Tbsp. of the meat filling and 1 piece of the mozzarella in the center and roll into a ball making sure all the filling is covered .
7. Then in a bowl mix the breadcrumbs with the parmesan cheese and Italian parsley. In another bowl whisk the egg slightly
8. Dip the arancini balls first in the egg and then in the breadcrumb mixture. Now refrigerate for 30 minutes or even overnight.
9. Then bring 3 cups of canola – olive oil blend to medium

high heat and fry the rice balls until golden brown about 5 minutes.

10. Drain on absorbent paper . serve hot.

Make sure the rice is completely chilled before forming the arancini. Cold rice is much easier to shape and will hold together better. Keep your hands slightly damp as you form the balls, and don’t overfill them—this helps prevent the filling from leaking out while cooking.

Tip text

Appetizer, Main Course, Side Dish

Italian

Arancini, Italian rice balls