



ANSON MILLS

Arancini with Soppresata

Yield

Fifteen 1 3/4-inch arancini (or 30 one-bite arancini)

Time

Once you have made the stock, about 2 hours of active work and at least 4 hours of chilling time

Cooking Remarks

As for the magic we mentioned above, this recipe calls for smoked scamorza, a spun mozzarella-style cheese, because it happens to be particularly good with soppresatta (a dry Italian sausage). But, seriously, you don't *have* to go with either one. A nice salami and fontina Val d'Aosta are perfectly capable of replacing them. For that matter, if you prefer cocktail-size arancini, skip the stuffing altogether! Either way, panko is the bread crumb of choice because it crisps up far better than your average fine bread crumbs.

Arancini are not difficult. But they are a time investment best spaced over two days. Having said that, these little balls prove amazingly resilient. We fried a half batch one afternoon during testing, only to discover that the remaining arancini—hanging out on a baking sheet in our fridge *fully breaded*—fried to perfection two days later! That's to say you don't have to panic them off into the fryer just after breading. Once fried, they rewarm beautifully—and they're surprisingly tasty at room temperature, too. Who knew?

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a small saucepan and a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan; a wooden spoon; a ladle; a medium bowl and a small bowl; a whisk; two or three baking sheets; parchment paper; a wide, shallow bowl or small baking dish; a heavy-bottomed saucepan (with roughly a 7-inch diameter and 5-inch depth) or a Fry Daddy; an instant-read or deep-fry thermometer; and a wire skimmer.

Ingredients

2 3/4 cups Rich Homemade Chicken Stock
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/3 cup minced shallot
1 small garlic clove, minced
1 cup (7 ounces) Anson Mills Carolina Gold Rice
1/2 cup dry white wine or vermouth
1 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme
1 Turkish bay leaf
Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 ounces finely grated Parmesan Reggiano
3 large eggs
2 to 3 ounces smoked scamorza, cut into fifteen 1/2-inch cubes

3 or 4 thin slices soppressata, cut into fifteen 1/2-inch squares
1 teaspoon olive oil or vegetable oil
About 1½ cups panko
About 4 cups peanut oil for deep-frying

Directions

- 1.** Put the chicken stock in a small saucepan, cover, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Turn the heat to low and keep the stock hot while you cook the risotto.
- 2.** Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan over medium-low heat until it foams. Add the shallot and sauté, stirring with a wooden spoon, until translucent nearly melted into the butter, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring constantly, for about 30 seconds. Add the rice, increase the heat to medium, and sauté until the grains are coated with butter and the edges have turned translucent, about 2 minutes. Add the wine, stir, and simmer until almost fully absorbed. Ladle in about 1 cup of hot stock and add the thyme, bay leaf, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper and stir to distribute the liquid among the grains. Cook the rice, uncovered and stirring frequently, until the liquid has been almost fully absorbed and the mixture begins to look dry; adjust the heat as need to maintain a steady but gentle simmer. Ladle in about ½ cup of hot stock and continue to cook the risotto, stirring frequently; add more stock only after the previous addition has been absorbed. After you have added the fourth installment of stock (for a total of about 2½ cups), allow the rice to cook until it has absorbed all of the liquid and is thick and creamy. Taste the rice; it should be tender with the faintest al dente “bite” at the center of the grain. If it is undercooked, add the remaining hot stock about 2 tablespoons at a time, simmer until the liquid is absorbed, and taste again. The idea is to use the minimum amount of liquid so that the risotto is as thick and dry as possible. When the rice is done—after about 20 minutes—stir in the Parmesan. Transfer to a medium bowl and discard the bay leaf. Taste the risotto for seasoning and add more salt and pepper, if desired (the risotto should taste aggressively seasoned in order for the arancini to be full-flavored). Let cool until warm to the touch, about 30 minutes; stir occasionally to help the rice release its heat.
- 3.** In a small bowl, whisk 1 egg until well combined. Add the beaten egg to the risotto and stir until fully incorporated. Let cool to room temperature, and then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 3 hours, or for up to 2 days.
- 4.** Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Divide the chilled risotto mixture into fifteen evenly sized portions, each about 1.6 ounces in weight (or about 3 generous tablespoons in volume). Using your hands and a light touch (the risotto may be a little gooey but rinsing your hands after shaping every 2 or 3 balls helps), roll each portion into a rough ball—the shape does not need to be perfect—and set the ball on the prepared baking sheet. (For mini arancini, weigh out thirty 0.8-ounce portions and shape them into neat balls. They will be too small for stuffing, but delightfully dainty with cocktails.)
- 5.** Using your index finger, poke a hole into the center of a risotto ball. Insert a slice of soppressata into the center, then a cube of cheese, then a second slice of soppressata. Enclose the cheese and soppressata in the rice; reshape the ball, this time forming it into a neat sphere;

and return it to the baking sheet. Stuff the remaining risotto balls with the remaining cheese and the remaining sopressatta in the same way. Cover the baking sheet with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or for up to 24 hours.

6. When you are ready to fry the arancini, in a medium bowl, whisk together the remaining 2 eggs, the water, and the olive oil. Put the panko in a wide, shallow bowl or small baking dish. Have ready a clean baking sheet. Gently drop 3 or 4 chilled risotto balls into the panko and roll them around until coated on all sides. One at a time, lift each ball out, dust off excess panko, and place it on the baking sheet. Add a panko-coated ball to the egg and roll it around with a fork until coated on all sides. Lift the fork and allow the excess egg to drip off, and then drop the ball into the panko again. Roll the ball around, gently patting gently to help the panko adhere in a thick, even layer. Lift out the ball, gently reshape it into a nice sphere, and return it to the baking sheet. Repeat until all of the risotto balls are breaded.

7. Pour enough oil into a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan (with roughly a 7-inch diameter and 5-inch depth) or a Fry Daddy to reach a depth of about 2 inches. Set the saucepan over medium-high heat or plug in the Fry Daddy. Line a baking sheet with a double thickness of paper towels. When the oil registers about 360 degrees on an instant-read or deep-fry thermometer, carefully drop in a few risotto balls; don't overcrowd the pot. Fry the arancini, gently and occasionally turning them with a wire skimmer, until deeply browned all around, 2 to 3 minutes. (Mini arancini will take only a minute or so to brown.) Using the skimmer, transfer the arancini to the prepared baking sheet. Fry the remaining risotto balls in batches in the same manner, allowing the oil to regain its heat after each batch. Serve the arancini as soon as they are all ready, or keep them warm in a 200-degree oven for 20 to 30 minutes. (They're also quite good at room temperature, and leftovers reheat surprisingly well on a baking sheet in a 325-degree oven for about 10 minutes.)