

WORLD'S BEST ARANCINI (SICILIAN RICE BALLS)

Cooking Times and Servings

- **Prep time:** 1 hour 15 minutes
 - **Cook time:** 1 hour
 - **Rest/chill time:** 45 minutes
 - **Total time:** about 3 hours
 - **Servings:** 12 arancini (large street-food size)
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Ingredients

Saffron Rice

- Water: **4 cups (1,000 ml)**
- Rice (mix Originario + Roma, or Arborio as a substitute): **2 1/2 cups (500 g)**
- Bouillon cube (or 2 tsp bouillon powder): **1 cube**
- Saffron: **1 packet (about 0.1 g)** (or a generous pinch)
- Butter: **4 tbsp (60 g)**
- Grated **Parmigiano Reggiano**: **1/2 cup (50 g)**

Ragù Filling

- Ground beef (or 50/50 beef & pork): **1 lb (500 g)**
- Onion, finely chopped: **1/2 medium (about 75 g)**
- Extra virgin olive oil: **2 tbsp (30 ml)**
- Bay leaf: **1**
- Tomato passata (or smooth tomato sauce): **2 3/4 cups (650 ml)**
- Salt and black pepper: **to taste**
- Nutmeg: **1/4 tsp**
- Cinnamon: **a pinch**
- Peas, cooked: **1 cup (150 g)**

Cheese Center + Assembly

- Melty cheese (Galbanino, low-moisture mozzarella, or provolone), cubed: **7 oz (200 g)**

Batter + Breading

- All-purpose flour: **1 1/2 cups (190 g)**
- Water: **1 1/2 cups (360 ml)** (plus a splash if needed)
- Breadcrumbs: **3–4 cups (300–400 g)**

Frying

- Neutral frying oil (peanut/canola/vegetable): **6–8 cups (1.5–2 L)** (as needed for depth)
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Instructions

1) Make the ragù (and let it cool)

1. In a large skillet, warm olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and sauté **6–8 minutes** until soft.
2. Add ground meat, bay leaf, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt, and pepper. Cook until browned, breaking it up well.
3. Pour in passata. Simmer on low, uncovered, **30–40 minutes**, until thick (not watery).
4. Stir in cooked peas. Taste and adjust seasoning. Remove bay leaf.
5. Spread on a plate or tray to cool faster, then refrigerate.

2) Cook the saffron rice (and cool completely)

1. Bring water to a boil. Stir in bouillon and saffron until dissolved.
2. Add rice and cook until very tender and the liquid is absorbed (stir often near the end).
3. Off heat, mix in butter and **Parmigiano Reggiano**.
4. Spread rice on a wide tray in a thin layer to cool completely. Chill **30–45 minutes** (this makes shaping easy and the arancini hold together).

3) Shape the arancini (classic “cone/oval” style)

1. Keep a small bowl of water nearby to dampen hands.
2. Scoop about **1/2 cup (about 120–140 g)** rice into your palm and flatten.
3. Make a deep pocket; add **1–2 tbsp ragù** plus **2–3 cheese cubes**.
4. Seal with more rice and compact firmly into an oval with one slightly pointed end.
5. Repeat. Place on a tray and chill **15 minutes** while you prep batter.

4) Batter + breadcrumbs (the crunch trick)

1. Whisk flour and water into a smooth, fairly thick batter—like pancake batter.
2. Roll each arancino in batter, letting excess drip off.
3. Coat in breadcrumbs, pressing well.

4. **Extra-crispy option:** dip again in batter and breadcrumbs for a second coat.

5) Fry to golden perfection

1. Heat oil to **350°F (175°C)** in a deep pot.
 2. Fry **2–3 at a time** (don't crowd) for **5–7 minutes**, turning until deeply golden.
 3. Drain on a rack or paper towels. Rest **2 minutes**, then serve hot so the center stays stretchy.
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Tips and Tricks (Nonna-approved)

- **Cool everything:** Warm rice = arancini that crack open in the oil.
- **Ragù must be thick:** If it's runny, it'll leak. Simmer longer if needed.
- **Pack them firmly:** Gentle shaping makes hollow spots = oil intrusion.
- **Oil temperature matters:** Too low = greasy; too high = browned outside, cold inside.
- **Freeze for later:** Freeze breaded (unfried) arancini on a tray, then bag. Fry from frozen at **325°F (165°C)** until hot inside, then finish at **350°F (175°C)** for crunch.