

Pimento Cheese Arancini

Makes 16 servings

Arancini

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 cup finely chopped sweet onion
1 cup Arborio rice
1 teaspoon salt, plus more for seasoning
¼ teaspoon coarse-ground pepper
½ cup dry white wine
3 cups warm chicken stock
1¼ cup water, divided
1 large egg
1 large egg yolk
¾ cups Queen Charlotte bacon pimento cheese
¼ cup Parmesan cheese
½ cup all-purpose flour
2 cups finely ground Panko breadcrumbs (use food processor)
Oil, for frying

Sauce

1 cup pepper jelly
2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes. Stir in the rice, salt and pepper. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon. Do not let rice brown. Add the wine and cook until wine is almost evaporated, about 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Reduce the heat to medium, and add the chicken stock, ½ cup at a time, stirring constantly so the rice releases its starch. Continue to add stock until the liquid is mostly evaporated. Stir in ¾ cup water, ¼ cup at a time, until the rice is tender, and the risotto is creamy and thick. Cooking time is about 18 minutes. Pour the mixture into a large bowl, and place in the refrigerator to cool, at least 1 hour.

When the rice mixture is cool, remove it from the refrigerator, and stir in the egg, egg yolk, pimento cheese and Parmesan. Form balls of about 2 tablespoons of rice mixture. Store in the refrigerator until ready to bread and cook, up to 1 day.

In a shallow bowl, whisk ¼ cup flour with ¼ cup water to form a smooth paste, then whisk in an additional ¼ cup water to form a slurry.

Roll the rice balls in the flour slurry, then transfer to breadcrumbs in a shallow dish. Roll the balls in the breadcrumbs to coat, shaking off any excess. Transfer the balls to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat with remaining rice mixture.

Fill a large saucepan about 4-inches deep with oil. Heat the oil over medium-high heat to about 350 degrees F. Use a slotted spoon to drop 4 rice balls into the preheated oil and fry until very golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove to a paper towel-lined plate and lightly season with salt.

To make the sauce, whisk the jelly, mustard and vinegar until smooth. Serve the rice balls with pepper jelly dipping sauce.