

Pallotte cacio e ova/ Cheese-and-Egg Balls Stewed in Tomato Sauce



Pallotte are soft, spongy balls made with day-old bread and grated cheese, simmered in a very smooth tomato sauce. Serve them in small bowls, with plenty of crusty bread to mop up the sauce.

Serves 4 to 6 as a starter

For the Tomato Sauce

¼ cup/60 ml extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled

½ celery stalk

¼ red bell pepper, seeded

3 cups/720 ml tomato puree (passata)

2 cups/480 ml water

Fine sea salt

For the Pallotte

7 ounces/200 g

day-old bread, crusts removed

7 ounces/200 g Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated

3½ ounces/100 g Pecorino Romano, grated

4 large/200 g eggs, lightly beaten

½ clove garlic, minced

2 tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley

4 cups/1 L vegetable or other neutral oil for deep-frying

Crusty bread for serving

Prepare the sauce: In a large frying pan, heat the olive oil over medium-low heat. Add the garlic, celery, and red pepper and cook, stirring, until the garlic is golden and fragrant, about 2 minutes. Pour in the tomato puree and water and bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 20 minutes, until the sauce is glossy but still quite liquid. Taste and season with salt; set aside.

Make the pallotte: In a medium bowl, soak the bread in cold water to cover for 5 minutes. Check the bread; it should have become soft again. If it's still a bit hard, let it soak for a few minutes longer.

Remove the bread from the water and squeeze it to remove the water. Crumble it into a large bowl. Add the grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and pecorino, then add the eggs, garlic, and parsley. Mix the ingredients together, squeezing them with your hands, until a soft, moist, slightly crumbly dough forms, then continue to mix until it no longer sticks to your hands.

To form the pallotte, scoop up ½ tablespoon of the dough and, with slightly wet hands, roll into a ball. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and repeat with the remaining dough; you should end up with about 3 dozen pallotte.

Pour the frying oil into a large high-sided pot set over medium-high heat. Set a wire rack on a rimmed baking sheet and place nearby.

When the oil registers 350°F/175°C on a deep-frying thermometer, add the pallotte to the pot, cooking them in batches; if you crowd the oil, the temperature will drop and the pallotte will

absorb too much oil. As you add them, the pallotte should roll over on themselves and dance in the oil; fry until golden brown, about 5 minutes, then transfer to the wire rack. Fry the remaining pallotte in batches, allowing the oil to return to temperature between batches.

Remove the garlic, celery, and pepper from the tomato sauce and heat it until hot. Add the pallotte to the sauce and simmer for 5 minutes. Serve immediately.

Notes: The pallotte should be simmered in the tomato sauce just before serving, or they will become soggy. But you can fry the pallotte in advance and store them in the fridge, then cook them in the tomato sauce when ready to serve.

Use any leftover sauce to dress a bowl of spaghetti: the pallotte infuse the sauce with a cheesy flavor, making it a great choice for a quick meal.

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