

CHICKEN SOUP WITH RICOTTA DUMPLINGS *By* DIANE UNGER **2 HOURS** *1 hour active, plus chilling*

Polpette di ricotta, or ricotta “meatballs” (named only for their round shape, not because they contain meat), hail from Calabria in southern Italy. In the humble soup known as polpette di ricotta in brodo, the “meatballs” are gently poached in hot broth, where they turn into light, tender dumplings. The mildness of the ricotta allows the savory, pleasantly funky flavor of pecorino to come to the fore. For our version, we enhance store-bought chicken broth by simmering in a few aromatic vegetables plus bone-in chicken thighs that later provide shredded meat to make the soup more substantial. The dumpling mixture needs at least an hour or up to 24 to chill and hydrate before shaping, and the formed dumplings require at least 30 minutes in the refrigerator to firm up before cooking, so plan accordingly. If convenient, the broth can be made in advance and refrigerated in an airtight container for up to three days, but if making ahead, it’s best to wait to shred the chicken until just before serving.

**Don’t bother finely chopping the vegetables* for the broth. Cut them into chunks that will soften and release flavor into the liquid but that still are large enough to easily scoop out with a slotted spoon. When removing the dumplings from the pot after poaching, be sure to handle them gently as they’re quite delicate.*

- 3 slices (5 ounces) hearty white sandwich bread, crusts removed, torn into pieces
- 1 1/2 ounces (without rind) pecorino Romano cheese, cut into rough 1/2 inch chunks, plus finely grated pecorino Romano cheese, to serve
- 1 cup whole-milk ricotta cheese
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1/4 teaspoon grated nutmeg

- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 2 quarts low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, trimmed
- 1 large yellow onion, cut into large chunks
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and cut into thirds or fourths
- 2 medium celery stalks, cut into thirds or fourths
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

INGREDIENTS

- 3 SLICES (5 OUNCES) HEARTY WHITE SANDWICH BREAD, CRUSTS REMOVED, TORN INTO PIECES
- 1½ OUNCES (WITHOUT RIND) PECORINO ROMANO CHEESE, CUT INTO ROUGH ½-INCH CHUNKS, PLUS FINELY GRATED PECORINO ROMANO CHEESE, TO SERVE
- 1 CUP WHOLE-MILK RICOTTA CHEESE
- 2 LARGE EGG YOLKS
- ¼ TEASPOON GRATED NUTMEG
- KOSHER SALT AND GROUND BLACK PEPPER
- 2 QUARTS LOW-SODIUM CHICKEN BROTH
- 2 POUNDS BONE-IN, SKIN-ON CHICKEN THIGHS, TRIMMED
- 1 LARGE YELLOW ONION, CUT INTO LARGE CHUNKS
- 2 MEDIUM CARROTS, PEELED AND CUT INTO THIRDS OR FOURTHS
- 2 MEDIUM CELERY STALKS, CUT INTO THIRDS OR FOURTHS
- ½ CUP ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- ¼ CUP FINELY CHOPPED FRESH FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY

DIRECTIONS

- 01 In a food processor, combine the bread and pecorino chunks; process until finely ground, about 30 seconds. Add the ricotta, egg yolks, nutmeg, and ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper; process until smooth, about 1 minute, scraping the bowl as needed. Transfer to a medium bowl, cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.
- 02 In a large Dutch oven, combine the broth, chicken thighs, onion, carrots and celery. Bring to a simmer over medium-high, then reduce to low, cover and simmer until a skewer inserted into the chicken meets no resistance, about 45 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat.
- 03 Using tongs, transfer the chicken to a medium bowl; set aside until cool enough to handle. Meanwhile, using a slotted spoon, remove and discard the vegetables from the broth. Taste the broth and season with salt and pepper; set aside. Using 2 forks or your hands, shred the chicken into bite-size pieces; discard the skin and bones. Cover and set aside until ready to use.
- 04 Line a rimmed baking sheet with kitchen parchment. Have ready the flour in a pie plate or other shallow dish. Scoop the chilled ricotta mixture into 16 portions, each about a generous tablespoon, onto the prepared baking sheet. Using your hands, form the portions into balls, drop them into the flour and toss to coat. Shake off the excess and return the dumplings to the baking sheet. Refrigerate uncovered for at least 30 minutes or up to 1 hour.
- 05 Return the broth to a simmer over medium. Gently add the dumplings and return the broth to a simmer. Cover and cook, adjusting the heat as needed to maintain a simmer (do not allow the broth to boil), for 10 minutes; the dumplings will rise to the surface and expand.
- 06 Using a slotted spoon, divide the dumplings among individual bowls. Let rest for about 5 minutes to allow the dumplings to firm up; they will slump slightly as they cool. Divide the shredded chicken among the bowls and sprinkle each portion with parsley. Ladle in the hot broth and sprinkle with grated pecorino.