



April 29, 2015

## Don't be Intimidated by Polenta

Polenta has a reputation for being labour-intensive and fussy, but it's actually a simple peasant dish: corn meal, cooked into a thick porridge that you can dress up with a variety of sauces and toppings.

Its origins are Italian, where it referred to a dish made of gelatinized grain meal. When corn was introduced from the New World, Italians found it to be an ideal grain for this purpose, and now corn is synonymous with polenta.

In the recipes provided here, we put aside the traditional time-consuming simmer-and-stir method that intimidates so many cooks. Instead, we boil it for a shorter time, take it off the heat and let it cook in its own heat like steamed rice.

The first recipe is a comforting egg dish with tomato and Parmesan cheese. Imagine the creaminess of the egg yolk breaking over the hearty polenta -- heavenly.

The second recipe is a variation of risotto made with corn instead of arborio rice, but with Gouda cheese for a smoky variation over the usual Parmesan.

We've posted a video tutorial for the Leek and Gouda Polenta at tutorial at [youtube.com/TheBlueFlameKitchen](http://youtube.com/TheBlueFlameKitchen).

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### TOMATO-POACHED EGGS ON POLENTA

4 cups no-salt-added chicken broth or water  
1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
1 tbsp chopped fresh thyme  
1 tbsp chopped shallot  
1 clove garlic, finely chopped  
1 tsp salt  
3/4 cup cornmeal  
1 1/2 cups store-bought or homemade tomato sauce  
4 large eggs  
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1. To prepare polenta, combine broth, oil, thyme, shallot, garlic and salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat.

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2. Gradually whisk in cornmeal; cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 10 - 12 minutes. Remove from heat; cover and set aside.
3. Place tomato sauce in a deep non-stick medium frypan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat.
4. Working with one egg at a time, crack each egg into a custard cup and carefully pour egg into simmering tomato sauce, spacing eggs evenly apart.
5. Cover frypan and poach eggs until eggs are set.
6. To serve, place polenta on each of 4 individual serving plates. Top each serving with 1 poached egg and tomato sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Serves 4.

Nutritional analysis per serving:

275 calories, 12.4 g fat, 16.7 g protein, 26.8 g carbohydrate, 3.1 g fibre, 1308 mg sodium

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## LEEK AND GOUDA POLENTA

- 1 tsp salted butter
- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 1 cup sliced leeks (white and tender light green portions only)
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 4 cups no-salt-added chicken broth
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup shredded Gouda cheese
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh basil or 1 tsp dried basil, crumbled
- 3/4 tsp freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 tsp salt

1. Melt butter with oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add leeks and sauté until softened, about 4 - 5 minutes.
2. Add garlic and sauté for 1 minute.
3. Add broth and stir to combine. Bring to a boil over medium heat.
4. Reduce heat to a simmer and gradually whisk in cornmeal; cook, stirring, until liquid is absorbed and cornmeal is softened. Remove from heat.
5. Add cheese, basil, pepper and salt, stirring until cheese is melted. Serve immediately. Serves 6.