

GUASTELLO'S VILLAGE MARKET

Pan-Fried Polenta with Mushrooms

Serves 6

Ingredients

3 cups hot Shortcut Polenta (Recipe Follows)
1 Tbs. olive oil
4 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 lb. mixed fresh mushrooms, trimmed and sliced 1/4-inch-thick
Kosher salt
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
Freshly ground black pepper
1 oz. (1/4 cup) shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano

Spread the polenta 1/2-inch thick in a 8x8-inch baking dish. Cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Heat the oil and 1 Tbs. of the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until the butter foams. Add the mushrooms, season with salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms begin to brown, about 7 minutes. Add the garlic and continue cooking, stirring often, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat, stir in 1 Tbs. of the remaining butter and the parsley. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm.

Meanwhile, invert the polenta onto a cutting board and cut into six 2 x 3-inch rectangles. Melt the remaining 2 Tbs. butter in a 12-inch non-stick skillet over medium heat. Arrange the polenta in the skillet in a single layer and cook, undisturbed, until golden brown on the bottom, about 5 minutes. Flip and cook until golden, about 4 minutes more.

Top the polenta with the mushrooms, garnish with the cheese, and serve.

Making soft, golden polenta with the traditional Italian method usually takes 30 minutes to an hour. But this genius shortcut—pouring boiling water over the polenta in the morning and letting it sit on the counter during the workday—cuts the cooking time down to less than 15 minutes. Polenta is wonderfully forgiving: You can adjust the texture by adding a little more broth or water for a looser result, or cook the polenta longer, stirring often at the end, if you like it thicker.

Short Cut Polenta

11 oz. (2 cups) polenta (not instant or quick-cooking)
3 cups boiling water
3 cups lower-salt chicken broth or water; more as needed
Fine sea salt
2 oz. (2 cups) finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; more for serving

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1-1/2 oz. (3 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces
Freshly ground black pepper

Soak the polenta

Put the polenta in a 4-quart heavy-duty saucepan and whisk in the boiling water. Cover and let sit at room temperature for at least 8 and up to 12 hours.

Cook the polenta

In a 2-quart saucepan, bring the broth to a boil. Whisk the broth and 1 tsp. salt into the polenta, loosening it and breaking up any clumps. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, whisking once or twice, about 5 minutes.

Turn the heat down to maintain a simmer and continue cooking, whisking constantly, until the polenta thickens from soupy to porridge-like, about 2 minutes.

Turn the heat down to low. Cover and cook, stirring vigorously and scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon or spatula every couple of minutes. When you can see the bottom of the pan as you drag the spoon across it, 5 to 10 minutes later, begin tasting the polenta; it's done when it's thick, creamy, and tender. It should be granular, but not gritty.

Remove from the heat, and stir in the cheese, butter, and 1/2 tsp. pepper until the butter is melted. Season to taste and serve right away, passing more cheese at the table.

****Cook's Note: For the recipe above, Pan-Fried Polenta with Mushrooms, cut the Short Cut Polenta recipe in half.**

Make Ahead Tips

Once soaked, the polenta can be refrigerated, covered, for up to 2 days before cooking.

Credit: finecooking.com