

Savory Polenta (with Speck and Parmigiano Reggiano)

Delicious, savory corn grits!

BY ANDREW M. MALEC



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I really enjoy cooking and creating different flavor profiles and contrasting textures in my dishes. This is a very comforting and quick dish to prepare that I made one evening for dinner. This dish can literally be prepared in 15 minutes.

I really like this dish because of the balance between the savory and sweet notes of the polenta contrasted against the saltiness of the speck and Parmigiano Reggiano. Although the instructions on my yellow corn grits say to use a 3:1 ratio of liquid to polenta, I prefer a 4:1 liquid ratio for the smoothness and silkiness that results. The textural element that the crispy speck (an Italian cured smoked ham) lends to this dish is an important contrasting element to the smooth polenta. So is the “pop” from the addition of the green peas which also provides a great textural contrast to the creaminess of the polenta, and lends a refreshing garden element to accompany the richness of the chicken infused polenta with just a hint of thyme.

I also like this dish because of its versatility. Non-meat eaters can

INGREDIENTS

(one to two servings)

2 tbsp. of avocado, or vegetable oil
1 oz. of diced onion
½ cup of yellow corn grits (polenta)
2 to 3 cups of chicken stock
1 tsp. of thyme
¼ cup of frozen peas
2 oz. of crisped speck
Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
Salt/pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the oil in a small pot, then sauté the diced onion until translucent (approximately 2 minutes).
2. Add the chicken stock, then bring to a boil (start with 2 cups of stock).
3. Once the chicken stock is boiling, lower the heat and slowly add the polenta while stirring. Stir occasionally over low-medium heat for 2 minutes, then add the thyme and peas.
4. Continue cooking over low-medium heat another 5 to 10 minutes (add more liquid to your desired consistency), stirring occasionally.

substitute pan-seared scallops or shrimp for the speck, and vegetable stock can also be substituted for the chicken stock. However, remember to include a textural component such as green beans or asparagus if you are not topping your polenta with crispy speck, prosciutto, or bacon. Depending on the ingredients you choose to include in your dish, you can also utilize different seasonings to change the flavor profile of the dish (e.g., fennel

5. Crisp the speck in the microwave for about 20 seconds. Let cool. Then crumble the speck.
6. Plate the polenta in a bowl, add a few grinds of black pepper (if desired), and top with the Parmigiano Reggiano and speck. If desired, add salt, but be careful to not over salt the dish. I find that the dish has enough saltiness from the cheese and chicken stock (bouillon that I use is already seasoned).
7. Enjoy!

NOTES

- With the exception of the liquid to polenta ratio, the instructions listed above are for guidance only. I rarely measure when I cook.
- Crisped bacon or prosciutto can be easily substituted for the speck.
- For non-meat eaters, vegetable stock can be substituted for chicken stock.
- Pan-seared scallops or shrimp are a nice substitute for the speck.
- Fresh mushrooms sautéed with butter and oyster sauce are also an excellent topping for the savory polenta in lieu of the speck.

seeds for an anise flavor, or ginger for an Asian flavor).

This is a simple, but very flavorful dish to prepare. If you are so inclined, please give this dish a try. Enjoy!



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