

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN


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Creamy Parmesan Polenta

SERVES 2

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Be sure to use traditional dried polenta here, not instant polenta or precooked; dried polenta looks like coarse-ground cornmeal and can be found near cornmeal or pasta in the grocery store. Do not omit the baking soda—it reduces the cooking time and makes for a creamier polenta. It is important to cook the polenta over very low heat, so use a flame tamer if your stovetop runs hot.

1½ cups water

Salt and pepper

Pinch baking soda

⅓ cup polenta

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup), plus extra for serving

1. Bring water to boil in small saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir in ¼ teaspoon salt and baking soda. Slowly add polenta in steady stream, stirring constantly with wooden spoon. Bring mixture to boil, stirring constantly, about 30 seconds. Reduce heat to lowest setting and cover.

2. After 5 minutes, whisk polenta to smooth out any lumps that may have formed, making sure to scrape down sides and bottom of saucepan. Cover and continue to cook, without stirring, until grains of cornmeal are tender but slightly al dente, 8 to 10 minutes longer. (Polenta should be loose and barely hold its shape; it will continue to thicken as it cools.)

3. Off heat, stir in butter and Parmesan and season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and let sit for 5 minutes. Serve, passing extra Parmesan separately.

SAUTEÉD CHERRY TOMATO AND FRESH MOZZARELLA TOPPING

Serves 2

Don't stir the cheese into the sauteéd tomatoes or it will melt prematurely and turn rubbery.

1½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 garlic clove, sliced thin

Pinch red pepper flakes

Pinch sugar

10 ounces cherry tomatoes, halved

Salt and pepper

3 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, cut into ½-inch cubes (½ cup)

2 tablespoons shredded fresh basil

Heat oil, garlic, pepper flakes, and sugar in 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until fragrant and sizzling, about 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes and cook until they just begin to soften, about 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper to taste and remove from heat. Spoon tomato mixture with any accumulated juices over polenta, top with mozzarella, and sprinkle with basil before serving.

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