

Chef from the Hood Recipes



Chef:
Tony Najiola

Restaurant:
Central Market

Recipe:
Fresh Corn Polenta!

Polenta is the little black dress of cuisine! Made from humble dried corn, polenta's a versatile dish that may be served simply or as "haute" as you like! Chef Tony Najiola creates his by simmering spices in milk, then stirring in the dried polenta, fresh roasted corn and dry cheese. Almost like a pudding in consistency, this elegant polenta makes a fabulous main course when paired with roasted poultry. Or serve it as a first course with roasted or sautéed mushrooms and shavings of Parmesan. Serves 4 (or 6 as a generous appetizer).

Start by prepping & roasting 2 ears of corn. This step may be done ahead. Soak 2 whole cobs in water for 2 hours. Roast uncovered in a 375° oven for 40 minutes. Cool, shuck, then slice off kernels with a sharp knife. Reserve kernels AND cobs.

Place these next ingredients in a heavy bottomed pot:

- .. 4 cups (1 quart) whole milk (Clover)
- .. 1 teaspoon EACH of coriander seed, fennel seed, mustard seed & black peppercorns
- .. 1/2 teaspoon of red pepper flakes
- .. 2 sprigs fresh herbs: thyme & parsley (Italian ~ flat leaf)
- .. 2 roasted corn cobs (kernels reserved for final step below)
- .. Bring milk, spices and cobs to a low simmer. Let simmer for a few minutes. Turn off heat and let liquid steep for at least 30 minutes. Pour through a strainer, and return the strained liquid to the pot.

Assemble these ingredients for the final steps to make the polenta.

- .. 2/3 cups polenta (sold dried, like corn meal) corn kernels from the 2 ears of roasted corn
- .. 1/2 cup grated cheese: dry Jack or Parmesan seasoning to taste: salt, cayenne & ground nutmeg
- .. Bring strained liquid back up to a simmer. Stir in the dried polenta by pouring it into the pot in a steady stream. Simmer and continue to stir continuously and slowly for 20 minutes or until the starchy flavor is gone, and the polenta has thickened. Stir in corn kernels and cheese. Season to your taste with salt, cayenne & nutmeg. Serve warm!