

Baked Polenta Casserole



Makes 8-10 servings

Ingredients

For the polenta:

- 4 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 tsp salt 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1 1/2 cups cornmeal (regular or instant)

For the tomato sauce:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 chopped onion
- 2 cloves of finely chopped garlic (or minced)
- Pinch hot red pepper flakes
- 2 – 28 oz tins plum tomatoes with juices (I found some Italian tomatoes that had only 20 mg of sodium which is very low compared to other brands)
- 1/2 tsp pepper Salt to taste
- 1/2 lb light ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup pesto sauce
- 3/4 cup grated part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 2 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
- 3 roma tomatoes diced
- 4 oz sliced mushrooms
- 1 red bell pepper diced
- Handful of spinach (or more)



Directions

Begin by preparing the polenta. You will need to do this at least a few hours in advance or even better prepare it the day before. Start by boiling the water, salt and pepper. Then slowly add the cornmeal in a thin stream stirring constantly with a whisk. Reduce heat to low and if you are using quick-cooking polenta cook for approx 5 minutes, if you are using regular polenta cook for 15-20 minutes, until thickened. Stir occasionally to keep from sticking.

Then pour the polenta mix into a 8 x 4 inch loaf pan lined with waxed paper. Chill for a few hours or overnight.

To prepare the sauce, begin by placing onion, garlic and hot pepper flakes in a dutch oven and cook on medium-low until the onions are tender.

Add canned tomatoes, roma tomatoes, mushrooms, and bell pepper and cook for approximately 30 minutes until thick.

Puree the sauce using a hand blender. Add salt and pepper.

Mix in Spinach.

Spread 1 cup of sauce over the bottom of a 13 x 9 inch baking dish.

Slice the polenta.

Cut each slice diagonally into triangles. Spread polenta triangles overlapping on the bottom of the pan.

Place dobs of ricotta cheese and pesto over polenta and then top with tomato sauce.

Top with mozzarella and parmesan cheese and bake at 375 degrees for 35 minutes.

Wait 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

Adapted from Bonne Stern's recipe in Simply HeartSmart Cooking.

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