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Polenta Tortas - Nothing Corny About Them!

By Susie Iventosch



A slice of polenta torta Photo Susie Iventosch

The term Italian term "torta" can refer to a dessert such as a cake, pie, tart or other elaborate dessert, but it also is the name given to a variety of savory dishes, often containing a creamy cheese, herbs or vegetables. Here, we will focus on the latter, as we make a beautiful and delicious polenta torta. This dish makes a pretty presentation and can be made in any serving dish with sides that are at least two inches high.

I ran out to HomeGoods to find this cute serving dish, but what I originally wanted was a glass dish to show off the layering effect. If you have a spring form pan, that would work as well. Also, you can make as many layers as you like. I only made two, but three would be very nice, indeed!

Though this recipe calls for pesto, sundried tomatoes and blue cheese, it can easily be made with goat cheese and a filling of caramelized onions with sauteed arugula or spinach. Some recipes call for roasted vegetables, while others use sausage, onion and tomato filling. It's kind of like pizza, in that you can be creative and make up fillings to satisfy your own tastes and desires!

The dish can be made ahead of time and reheated before serving, or can be served at room temperature. For this reason, it makes a nice party dish, and come to think of

it, might be good fare for the Bunco, Book, and Bridge club gatherings in the neighborhood!

Polenta-Pesto Torta

By Susie Iventosch



Polenta torta Photo Susie Iventosch

(Serves 6-8 as a side dish, 4-5 as a main course)

INGREDIENTS

1 1/4 cups water

1 1/4 cups chicken broth

1 1/4 cup half & half or milk

1 cup yellow cornmeal

1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese (can use Gorgonzola or goat cheese)

1/2 teaspoon hot sauce

1 cup prepared pesto (or make your own-even better!)

3/4 cup sundried tomatoes, drained and cut into julienne strips

1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS

In a large pot, heat all three liquids until boiling. Slowly, add cornmeal in a steady stream, all the while stirring with a wire whisk. When corn meal is absorbed and mixture is smooth, add blue cheese and hot sauce and stir just until cheese is melted.

Remove from heat and immediately pour half of the polenta mixture into the bottom of your serving dish, casserole or spring form pan. Smooth out. Spread half of the pesto over the top and arrange half of the sundried tomatoes on top of pesto.

As quickly as possible, spoon remaining polenta over the sundried tomatoes and smooth out with a rubber or offset spatula. Repeat process of spreading pesto and arranging sundried tomatoes on top. Sprinkle with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

Cool to room temperature and allow polenta to set up. When ready to serve, reheat in microwave or oven until hot and serve. Can make up to two days ahead, but cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use.



Polenta, arugula, and goat cheese torta Photo Susie Iventosch

Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

[back](#)

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