

## Polenta and Spring Vegetable Medley

When I think of all the hours I've spent needlessly stirring huge pots of polenta it brings a sincere tear to my eye. Only since I started using a pressure cooker in 2003 did it occur to me to try it with polenta. I used the pressure cooker to cook oatmeal one time and the idea of doing polenta the same way hit me, so I tried it and it worked beautifully. I actually did it again immediately to make sure it wasn't a fluke. What a time and aggravation saver using a pressure cooker to make polenta is! No more stirring and stirring and stirring and it comes out velvety smooth every single time!



Polenta	2 cups
Water	6 cups
Granulated Garlic	½ tsp
Salt	To Taste

I'd like to be able to fill a page with all sorts of cool things about the intricacies of using a pressure cooker to do polenta, but quite frankly it's a no-brainer! The ratio is 3:1 water to polenta. You can use stock if you want, but I prefer just water. You can use fresh garlic if you want as well, but it easily overpowers everything so I prefer granulated and not much of it. Make sure that you use a coarse cornmeal and that you have a high

quality pressure cooker with a thick bottom. Get the water boiling; add the corn meal and whisk, here's the only secret to the entire thing. Don't waste any time sealing the pressure cooker, there will barely be enough steam to seal it when you add the corn meal, if you allow it to thicken much at all you'll have a hard time sealing that sucker, so git-r-done immediately! Cook it for 5 minutes *on low* and allow it to come down to room

temperature on its own; don't use the quick release method of running cold water on the pressure cooker to release the pressure; that's it!

If you want to be fancy you can pour the polenta into something that will mold it into a shape and then turn that out onto a platter or take slices of it and present it on a plate or just spoon it directly onto plates and top it with a variety of vegetables.

Pictured at left is polenta topped with cauliflower, carrots, and green beans suspended in a lightly thickened vegetable broth with just Bragg's Aminos and some pepper.



Below I've done it with chick peas, asparagus, and red pepper suspended in one of my favorite liquids; the chick pea cooking liquid. Black olives would be marvelous in this one as well, but I often like this absolutely spectacular polenta with just green onions as pictured at the top of the recipe. You'll find that the polenta is the star, not the vegetables on top!

If you don't own a pressure cooker not to worry, a nice thick bottomed pot will do as well. Use the same ratio of 3:1 water to corn meal, add the corn meal to boiling water the same way you do with rice, and stir, baby stir! The stirring is crucial in order to yield that nice velvety consistency associated with well done polenta. However that's not always what I want. Sometimes I like a chunkier, coarse polenta which is basically a yellow version of the grits my grandmother used to serve at breakfast with the bacon fat basted eggs, biscuits, fried okra, ham, and red-eye gravy!

For a recipe featuring the more coarse style of polenta with some very southern accompaniments see the recipe for "Polenta with White Beans and Collard Greens."

