

## Easy Oven-Cooked Polenta

Lumps and stirring - that's what we hear about polenta. And the exacting technique is infamous -- bringing the water to a boil, adding cornmeal in a thin, steady stream (lumps!) while whisking (stirring!). Mediterranean cooking expert Paula Wolfert wrote about a much easier way to make polenta in 2003: cook it in the oven, stir once. And done.

### Ingredients:

1 cup medium-coarse or coarse cornmeal, preferably stone-ground  
4 to 5 cups water, see notes  
1 cup milk  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste  
¼ cup freshly-grated hard cheese (Parmesan, Romano, asiago etc)



### Cooking Instructions:

Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a large ovenproof skillet or Dutch oven. Pour in the cornmeal, water, milk, butter, and salt, and stir with a fork or whisk until blended. The mixture will not look emulsified. Bake uncovered for 40 minutes. Stir the polenta, taste, add salt if needed, and bake for another 10 to 20 minutes or longer—until it reaches the desired consistency you like. Remove from the oven, stir, and serve immediately or cover and keep warm until you are ready to serve.

### Optional Mushroom tomato topping:

Chop 1 pound mushrooms in about 1-inch pieces. In a large bowl, combine ⅓ cup olive oil, 1 ½ teaspoons each thyme and salt, and 1 teaspoon freshly-ground pepper. Add the mushrooms and , toss to coat with oil, and scrape onto a wide sheet pan so they are well spread out (otherwise they'll steam). Bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes. Stir and bake 10 minutes more. Mushrooms should be well-browned. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar and stir.

--Sarah Fritschner, Kentucky Food Writer