

September 4, 2016

**Recipe: Polenta Mushroom Gratin**

Layered Polenta Casserole with Mushrooms, Cheese and Cream Sauce

Servings: 4

- 1/2 ounce mushrooms, dried
- 4 cups water
- 5 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 cups corn meal  
salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound mushrooms, sliced 1/4 inch
- 2 cloves garlic, large, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme, dried  
salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 pint half and half
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup Fontina cheese, grated
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced

**Instructions:**

Soak the dried mushrooms in enough hot water, just to cover, for 30 minutes. Drain through several layers of cheesecloth, reserving liquid. Rinse mushrooms thoroughly to remove any dirt or grit.

Bring 4 cups of water to a boil in a medium non-stick saucepan. Add 1 tablespoon of butter, and the cornmeal, then salt to taste. Lower the heat and cook, stirring until very thick (about 20 minutes). Pour into a large loaf pan and place in refrigerator until completely cool.

Heat 2 tablespoons of butter and 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large skillet over high heat until hot. Add the fresh and the dried/soaked mushrooms, stir the mushrooms to coat with butter-oil mixture, then reduce the heat and add the garlic, thyme, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook until the mushrooms release their juices. Drain and reserve the juice. Set the mushrooms aside.

Mix the reserved mushroom liquid with enough half and half to make 2 cups.

Melt 2 more tablespoons of butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the flour and cook, stirring occasionally for about 3 to 4 minutes without browning. Whisk in cream mixture slowly and continue to cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste and add the nutmeg.

Assemble Casserole:

Lightly oil two 8"x 5"x 2" aluminum tins. Pour a little of the cream sauce into the bottom of the tins. Remove the polenta from the loaf pan and slice into 1/2" thick slices. Layer the polenta in a single layer in the bottom of the aluminum tins; then cover with half of the mushroom mixture, sprinkle with half of each of the cheeses, cover with some of the cream sauce and a sprinkling of fresh ground black pepper. Repeat layers ending with sauce. Sprinkle with fresh parsley.

Serving Suggestions: Fresh Bread / Tossed Green Salad

