

## Soft Polenta Integrale with Wild Mushroom Ragout

**Time:** 90 minutes cook time in a slow cooker or 1 hour in a saucepan; plus 40 minutes additional prep time.

Like cornmeal mush, soft polenta is spoonable and served piping hot—a sturdy savory porridge. It is garnished here with a simple wild mushroom ragout.

### Equipment Mise en Place

For this polenta you will need a slow cooker or a heavy-bottomed 2 1/2-quart saucepans (preferably a Windsor saucepan), a wooden spoon, a whisk, and a ladle or scoop.

For the ragout you will need a 2 1/2-quart saucepan, a whisk, a large skillet, and a wooden spoon.

### Ingredients

*For the polenta:*

- 1 cup (6 ounces) Anson Mills Polenta Integrale
- Spring or filtered water
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

*For the ragout:*

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon minced fresh thyme (or 1/4 teaspoon dried)
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/4 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 8 ounces small cremini mushrooms, cleaned, stemmed, and quartered
- 4 ounces assorted wild mushrooms, cleaned and, if large, sliced
- 2 medium shallots, minced (2 tablespoons)
- 1 small clove garlic, minced (1 teaspoon)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

## Directions

- 1.** Make the polenta: If you're using a slow cooker turn the polenta into the cooker and cover with 3 cups water. Stir once. Cover and turn the heat setting to high. Cook, stirring once or twice, until the polenta is tender and holds its shape on a spoon, about an hour and a half. (Cook times in slow cookers may vary depending on the capacity of the individual cooker and its heat settings.) Whisk in the salt, pepper, butter, and Parmesan. Turn the setting to warm.
- 2.** If you're cooking on the stove place the polenta and 4 cups water in a heavy-bottomed 2 1/2-quart saucepan (preferably one with fluted sides) and stir to combine. Set the pan over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the first starch takes hold, 5 to 8 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring frequently, until the grains are soft and hold their shape on a spoon, about an hour. Whisk in the salt, pepper, butter, and Parmesan. Cover and keep warm. (The polenta may be transferred to a bowl, covered, and set over barely simmering water. If necessary, thin the polenta with hot water before serving.)
- 3.** Make the ragout: While the polenta is cooking, pour the cream into a second 2 1/2-quart heavy-bottomed saucepan and simmer over low heat until it is thick and reduced by half, about 15 minutes. Whisk in the thyme, nutmeg, and Parmesan. Remove from the heat and set aside.
- 4.** Heat a large skillet over high heat, 2 minutes. Add the olive oil and swirl to coat. Add the cremini. Sear and toss intermittently until the mushrooms release their juices and begin to brown, about 3 minutes. Stir in the wild mushrooms, shallots, and garlic and continue to toss over high heat until the mushrooms are tender, 2 minutes. Stir in the salt and pepper. Add the reserved cream and parsley and stir to coat. Taste for seasoning.
- 5.** To serve: Scoop the polenta onto warm appetizer plates, leaving an indentation in the top. Spoon the mushroom ragout over. Serve immediately.

**Serves 4 to 6 as a first course**