Sweetcorn and Black Bean Polenta Hotdish

One 9×13 in (23×33 cm) dish, at least 4 qt/3.8 L;6 main-dish portions · Active 35 min · Total 1 hr 50 min

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil (15 ml)
- 1 medium onion, chopped (150 g)
- 1 red bell pepper, diced (150 g prepared)
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped (6 g)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin (2 g)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika (2 g)
- 1 can chopped tomatoes with juice (14 oz/400 g)
- 1/2 cup low-sodium vegetable stock (120 ml)
- 3 cans black beans, drained and rinsed (1 lb 9 oz/720 g drained total)
- 1 1/3 cups frozen sweetcorn (200 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt (1.5 g), for filling
- 2 1/2 cups water (600 ml), for polenta
- 1 cup milk (240 ml)
- 1 cup ordinary polenta cornmeal (180 g; weight controls)
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt (1.5 g), for polenta
- 2 oz cheddar, grated (60 g)

Set out

Oven, 9×13 in (23×33 cm) baking dish, at least 4 qt/3.8 L, 12-in/30-cm deep skillet, Heavy saucepan, at least 3 qt/2.8 L, Whisk, Long-handled spoon, Rimmed baking sheet, Suitable foil if needed, Food thermometer

Allergens

Milk; check cornmeal and stock labels for cross-contact. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat oven to 400°F (205°C). Put the dish on a rimmed sheet. Heat oil in the skillet over medium heat. Soften onion and pepper 8–10 minutes. Add garlic, cumin and paprika and stir 30 seconds.

2. Add tomatoes, stock, beans, frozen corn and filling salt. Simmer uncovered 12–15 minutes, stirring, until corn is cooked and sauce coats the beans rather than pooling loosely. Keep hot over low heat while making polenta.

3. Bring polenta water and milk just to a simmer in the heavy saucepan. Whisk in cornmeal gradually and add polenta salt. Lower heat and cook 20–25 minutes or according to the packet, stirring with a long-handled spoon, until tender and thick but spoonable. Keep bubbles gentle to prevent hot splashes. Add small measured splashes of hot water only if the packet requires more liquid. Take off heat and stir in cheddar.

4. Spread hot bean mixture in the dish. Distribute warm cooked polenta in small spoonfuls and gently join them into an even shallow top. Bake 20–25 minutes until lightly golden at the edges and the center and several other spots reach 165°F (74°C). Shield loosely if the top colors early.

5. Rest 5 minutes, then spoon through both layers into six portions.

Soft is the intended serving texture

A fresh portion may lean or spread slightly on the plate. Do not extend the oven time simply to make a perfectly squared slice; this is a warm spooned cornmeal topping.

A useful detail

The 110-minute total includes chopping, the bean sauce, polenta cooking with some overlap while filling stays hot, assembly, baking and rest. Different polenta grinds may need a longer packet cooking time and liquid adjustment; instant polenta is outside this base method.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C), at 40°F (4°C) or below. Use within 3 days or an earlier dairy deadline. Reheat to 165°F (74°C), covering to limit drying. Freeze promptly cooled portions for up to 2 months for quality; thaw in the refrigerator. The polenta firms as it cools.