Cocoa-Bean Squash Slab with a Cornbread Roof

1 shallow 23 × 33 cm/9 × 13 in pan, cut into 8 modest supper or buffet portions | Active 35 min | Cook 70 min | Total 105 min

Ingredients

- 600 g/1 lb 5 oz peeled butternut squash, cut into 1 cm/3/8 in cubes
- 150 g/5 1/4 oz onion, chopped
- 15 ml olive oil (1 tablespoon)
- 2 cans ready-to-eat black beans, drained and rinsed, 480 g/17 oz total
- 400 g/14 oz canned chopped tomatoes, with their juice
- 150 ml water (1/2 cup + 2 tablespoons)
- 8 g unsweetened cocoa (about 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon)
- 2 g smoked paprika (1 teaspoon)
- 3 g fine salt (1/2 teaspoon), divided 2 g filling and 1 g batter
- 100 g fine cornmeal (about 2/3 cup; weight controls)
- 80 g all-purpose flour (about 2/3 cup)
- 6 g baking powder (1 1/2 teaspoons)
- 180 ml milk (3/4 cup)
- 1 large egg, 50 g without shell
- 15 ml neutral oil (1 tablespoon), for batter

Set out

Oven, Deep 30 cm/12 in skillet with lid, 23 × 33 cm/9 × 13 in baking dish, usable capacity at least 4 L/4 1/4 qt, Rimmed supporting tray, Knife and board, Mixing bowl and whisk, Spoon, Food thermometer, Foil, Shallow containers and refrigerator

Allergens

Wheat, Milk, Egg. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 400°F/200°C. Put the baking dish on the supporting tray. Heat the olive oil in the skillet; cook onion and squash over medium heat 8 minutes, stirring.

2. Add beans, tomatoes, all 150 ml water, cocoa, paprika and 2 g salt. Stir well, cover and simmer 12-15 minutes until the squash is nearly tender. Uncover for a few minutes if watery; the mixture should hold a shallow spoon track.

3. Whisk cornmeal, flour, baking powder and remaining 1 g salt in the bowl. Separately beat milk, egg and neutral oil, then fold into the dry mixture just until no loose flour remains. Do not taste raw batter.

4. Spread the hot filling in the dish. Spoon the entire batter evenly over it, leaving the combined filling below about two-thirds of the dish height. Bake 30-35 minutes until the topping is firm and springy, with no wet floury seam at its center, and the casserole reaches 165°F/74°C in several central spots. Cover loosely if browning early; extend baking as needed.

5. Rest 10 minutes. Mark 8 pieces through the roof, then serve each with its share of beans and squash.

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Bring it

Pack the pan flat and take a broad serving spoon. Hot transport must maintain 140°F/60°C or above; the alternative is shallow chilled portions carried at 40°F/4°C or below. Uncontrolled travel plus buffet time has a 2-hour combined limit, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C.

Finish at the gathering

The fully baked dish needs no last-minute mixing. If chilled, request a 350°F/180°C oven for roughly 35-45 minutes under foil, and verify 165°F/74°C throughout before serving.

Make it yours

Cut small squares for a mixed buffet, or make the 8 stated portions a shared supper. A dark glaze or extra cheese is not needed to announce the cocoa idea.

Ingredient labels

Flour contains wheat, milk and egg are used in the batter. Check beans, baking powder and seasonings for additional ingredients.

A useful detail

The 105-minute total allows preparation, the stovetop stage, up to 35 minutes baking and the 10-minute rest. This is a modest cornbread layer over a substantial bean base, not a deep loaf.

Another way

Use ready-to-eat canned kidney beans at the same drained weight. Do not substitute uncooked dried beans on this method.

Replace squash with 600 g peeled sweet potato in the same 1 cm cubes; simmer until nearly tender before topping.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions promptly at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3 days, retaining any earlier opened-ingredient deadline. Follow the Bring it handling limit. Reheat covered portions to 165°F/74°C; the topping softens. Freeze promptly chilled portions for up to 2 months for quality, then thaw in the refrigerator.