Soft Polenta with White Beans and Cheddar

2 deep bowls of bean polenta, each with half the cheddar · Active 15 min · Total 30 min

Skills: Beginner with ordinary kitchen equipment

Ingredients

- Scant 1/2 cup dry instant polenta (80 g)
- 1 1/4 cups 2% milk (300 ml/about 309 g)
- 1 1/4 cups drinking water (300 ml), use 60 ml for beans and 240 ml for polenta; adjust total liquid to the packet if required
- About 1 1/3 cups cooked unsalted white beans, well drained (240 g)
- 1/3 cup grated cheddar (40 g)
- 1/8 teaspoon fine salt (0.75 g)
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper (0.3 g)

Set out

Stovetop, Heavy saucepan of at least 2 qt/1.9 L, Small saucepan, Whisk and spoon, Kitchen scale, 2 deep bowls, Thin-probe food thermometer

Allergens

Milk, Corn; check the polenta packaging for additional allergens. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Put cooked beans and 60 ml water in the small pan. Cover and heat gently 8–10 minutes, stirring, until steaming hot throughout; add no dry beans.

2. In the heavy saucepan, bring milk, the remaining 240 ml water and salt just to a gentle simmer. Slowly rain in the instant polenta while whisking. Reduce heat and cook for its full packet time, usually 5–8 minutes, stirring to the base. Use the packet-directed liquid if it differs from this soft-polenta ratio.

3. When the cornmeal has no raw gritty center, fold in hot beans and their small amount of liquid. Heat gently until the mixed dish reaches 165°F/74°C. Take off the heat, stir in cheddar and pepper, and divide evenly between 2 bowls. Serve promptly while spoonable.

A beginner skill to practice

Practice adding a dry grain in a thin stream while whisking. Once a lump forms, a rapid stir at the surface may miss its dry center.

A useful detail

The 30-minute total starts with cooked beans and an instant-polenta packet needing about 5–8 minutes. Cooking dry beans or using coarse grits would require a separate, longer method. Water changes do not add calories, but using more milk than listed does.

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 2 days. Reheat to 165°F/74°C, stirring in a little measured water to loosen the thickened polenta. Do not leave a deep saucepan cooling slowly on the stove. The assembled dish does not restart the beans' storage clock: retain the original cooking or can-opening date and use before its earlier safe or package deadline. Use only beans whose original handling and refrigeration are known.