Crisp Polenta Fingers with Pea and Tomato Ragu

12 crisp polenta fingers with pea-tomato ragu; 4 fingers and one-third of the ragu per serving · Active 20 min · Total 45 min

Skills: Easy

Ingredients

• About 2 1/2 cups plain firm cooked polenta, chilled promptly in a slab (500 g)

• 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon neutral oil (20 ml), for the polenta

• 1 tablespoon neutral oil (15 ml), for the ragu

• 1 small onion (100 g), finely diced

• 2 garlic cloves (6 g), finely chopped

• 1 can chopped tomatoes, 14 oz/400 g, with juice

• 1 teaspoon sweet paprika (2 g)

• 2 cups frozen peas (280 g)

• 1/2 teaspoon fine salt (3 g)

• 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.5 g)

Set out

Large baking tray, Baking parchment, Thin spatula, Medium saucepan, Food thermometer, Knife and board

Allergens

No major US allergen identified in the base ingredients. Check labels and substitutions.

Ingredient labels

The base contains no major US allergen ingredients, but check the polenta and canned tomato labels and any packaged seasonings.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 425°F/220°C. Line the tray. Cut the cold polenta slab into 12 similar fingers, about 4 by 1 inch/10 by 2.5 cm and 3/4 inch/2 cm thick, adjusting for the slab shape.

2. Arrange with gaps and brush all sides with the measured 20 ml oil. Bake for 15 minutes, turn carefully, then bake for 15–20 minutes more, until the corners brown and the center reaches 165°F/74°C.

3. Meanwhile heat the ragu oil in the saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook onion for 7 minutes, add garlic and paprika for 30 seconds, then add tomatoes, salt and pepper. Simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thickened.

4. Stir in frozen peas and cook for the packet’s stated time, usually 4–5 minutes, until tender and thoroughly hot. Keep at a gentle simmer if the polenta needs longer.

5. Serve four hot polenta fingers per portion with one-third of the ragu. Leave some crisp polenta surface free of sauce.

Save a slab on purpose

When cooking a plain polenta batch, a shallow container makes the surplus useful for this later texture. Label its original date. A large pot forgotten at room temperature is not a substitute for promptly chilled leftovers.

A useful detail

The 45-minute total begins with cooked polenta that is already firm and cold. To prepare specifically, cook plain polenta according to its packet, weigh 500 g, spread in a shallow 8 by 6-inch/20 by 15 cm container and cool promptly before refrigerating for at least 4 hours. That earlier cooking and chilling are additional.

Keep it well

Use cooked polenta that was cooled promptly, refrigerated at 40°F/4°C or below and made no more than 2 days earlier. Reheat the fingers once to 165°F/74°C and eat promptly; this does not restart the polenta’s storage clock. Cool newly made leftover ragu in a shallow container within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, and refrigerate for up to 3 days. Reheat ragu to 165°F/74°C.