

K's Kitchen: Restaurant quality mushroom polenta

By Kathryn Reed

Sometimes it amazes me the things I've never made. I checked off another one last weekend. Polenta.

Considering it's just cornmeal, it is pretty amazing restaurants can charge high prices for it. I realize it depends what is on top of it, but still.

And anytime wild mushrooms are part of any dish, the cost of the meal just went up. But the earthiness of these morsels cannot be compared to ordinary button mushrooms that are so bland.

What makes this recipe so outstanding is the complexity of the flavors and the variety of textures. And it looks pretty – so guests may be impressed.

It's not difficult to make, but there are moving parts. Keep an eye on the polenta as you focus on the mushrooms.

The only drawback is that I can see why people might be averse to eating polenta as a leftover. The consistency is nothing like it is on night No. 1. But I wasn't going to let any of it go to waste.

Adding more cheese to the polenta will make it creamier – and then less healthy.



Wild Mushroom Polenta (serves 6)

Polenta:

3 C water

1 C stone-ground polenta

2 ounces Parmesan cheese, divided

Bring water to boil. Reduce heat to medium-high. Gradually add polenta, stirring with whisk.

Reduce heat to low and cook for 30 minutes or until thick and creamy. Keep stirring.

Stir in 1 ounce of cheese.

Mushroom concoction:

1 T olive oil

12 ounces wild mushrooms, chopped

6 garlic cloves, minced

1 large red onion, sliced vertically

2 T thyme, chopped and divided

$\frac{1}{2}$ C dry white wine

3 T balsamic vinegar

1 C vegetable broth

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

12 mixed olives, coarsely chopped

1 14.5 ounce can unsalted chickpeas, drained

Heat oil in large skillet. Add mushrooms, garlic, onion and 1 T thyme. Cook for about 8 minute or until lightly browned.

Add wine and vinegar; cook until liquid is reduced by half.

Add broth, pepper, olives and chickpeas. Bring to boil.

Reduce heat to medium and simmer for about 6 minute or until slightly thickened.

Divide polenta evenly into 6 shallow bowls. Top evenly with mushroom mixture. Sprinkle cheese and remaining thyme on top.