RECIPE

# Soft polenta with white beans, mushrooms and spinach

A soft stone-ground polenta dinner under white beans, browned mushrooms and spinach, with a little reduced-fat Parmesan and measured salt.

MAKES

6 servings US Metric

TOTAL

1 h

## Ingredients

- [ ] 2 ½ cups whole-grain yellow cornmeal (stone-ground)
- [ ] 10 cups water
- [ ] ¾ tsp salt, for the polenta
- [ ] 1 tbsp olive oil, stirred into the polenta
- [ ] 4 tbsp reduced-fat grated Parmesan
- [ ] 2 tbsp olive oil, for the topping
- [ ] 1 large onion, chopped
- [ ] 8 oz cremini mushrooms, sliced
- [ ] 1 tsp garlic powder
- [ ] 1 tsp dried thyme
- [ ] 2 tbsp no-salt-added tomato paste
- [ ] 1 can (15 oz) no-salt-added white beans (cannellini), drained and rinsed
- [ ] 5 cups loosely packed baby spinach
- [ ] 1 tbsp red wine vinegar

## Method

1. Bring the 10 cups of water and the ¾ tsp salt to a boil in a heavy pot that holds at least 5 quarts. At 5,430 ft water boils near 203 °F, so it looks lively a little sooner than you expect.

2. Turn the heat to medium. Whisk in the cornmeal a handful at a time, letting it fall in a thin stream, and keep whisking for 1 minute so no lumps form.

3. Turn the heat to low and set the lid ajar. Cook 35 to 40 minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon every 5 minutes and scraping the bottom. The house runs this about a quarter longer than sea level because simmered food is slower here (our kitchen practice: CSU's quarter-longer rule is for meat).

- [ ] ¼ tsp salt, for the topping
- [ ] ½ tsp ground black pepper

4. While the polenta cooks, heat the 2 tbsp topping oil in a wide pan over medium heat. Cook the onion 5 minutes, then add the mushrooms and cook 8 to 10 minutes, until the liquid is gone and the edges brown.

5. Stir in the garlic powder, thyme, tomato paste and pepper for 1 minute. Add the beans and cook 3 minutes, until hot.

6. Add the spinach by the handful and turn it until wilted, about 2 minutes. Off the heat, stir in the vinegar and the ¼ tsp salt.

7. The polenta is done when the grains are soft with no gritty bite and it slides off the spoon in a slow ribbon. Off the heat, stir in the 1 tbsp olive oil and the Parmesan, cover, and let it stand 5 minutes.

8. Spoon the polenta into six bowls and top each with one-sixth of the bean and mushroom mix. Leftovers: refrigerate within 2 hours (1 hour above 90 °F). Reheat to 165 °F with 1 tbsp of water per bowl, stirring.