

Creamy Polenta (Serves 4–6)

Ingredients

- 1 cup polenta (coarse yellow cornmeal)
- 4 cups water (or use half water and half milk for extra richness)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Optional: ½ cup heavy cream or ¼ cup mascarpone for extra creaminess

Equipment

- Medium saucepan
- Whisk
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Measuring cups and spoons

Instructions

1. **Boil Liquid**
In a medium saucepan, bring the water (or water/milk mixture) and salt to a gentle boil over medium-high heat.
2. **Whisk in Polenta**
Gradually pour in the polenta in a steady stream while whisking constantly to avoid lumps.
3. **Simmer and Stir**
Reduce heat to low. Cook the polenta, stirring often with a wooden spoon, until thick and creamy—about 30–40 minutes. Scrape the sides and bottom to prevent sticking. (If it becomes too thick, add a splash more water or milk.)
4. **Finish with Butter and Cheese**
Stir in the butter and Parmesan cheese (and cream or mascarpone if using). Season with black pepper to taste.
5. **Serve Warm**
Serve immediately for soft, creamy polenta. If you let it sit, it will firm up—great for slicing and pan-frying later!