

Black Skillet Cornbread

Time: 10 minutes plus 25 to bake

Cornbread is a religion in the South. Quintessentially Southern, black skillet cornbread has a coarse, open crumb and a deep, crackling finish. Its sweetness comes from the natural sweetness of the cornmeal itself—or from a drizzle of sorghum or honey after baking—not from sugar in its batter. Many cooks consider the addition of wheat flour in any proportion objectionable. That being said, you may, if you wish, replace 1/2 cup of cornmeal with unbleached 1/2 cup of all-purpose flour in the recipe.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe you will need a well-seasoned 8- to 9-inch cast-iron skillet, a large bowl, a whisk, a 4-cup glass measure, and a rubber spatula.

Ingredients

2 1/2 cups (12 ounces) Anson Mills Coarse White or Yellow Cornmeal

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and lukewarm

1 large egg, room temperature, beaten

1 1/2 cups whole milk, room temperature

1 1/2 teaspoons vegetable oil

Directions

1. Adjust the racks to the lower-middle and upper-middle positions and heat the oven to 425 degrees. Heat an empty 8- to 9-inch cast iron skillet over medium-high heat for 10 minutes.

2. While the skillet heats, turn the cornmeal, salt, and baking powder into a large bowl and whisk to combine.

3. Pour the melted butter into a 4-cup glass measure. Add the egg and whisk until smooth. Add the milk and whisk until smooth. (If the surface of the liquid appears beaded with butter, warm the glass measuring cup and its contents in the microwave for 20 seconds.)

4. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and whisk lightly until smooth. The batter will be fairly thin. Add the vegetable oil to the hot skillet and tilt to distribute the oil. Scrape the batter into the skillet with a rubber spatula—it should sizzle. Immediately place the skillet on the lower oven rack and bake for 15 minutes. Transfer the skillet to the upper rack and continue baking until the cornbread is golden brown on top and tests clean with a toothpick, 5 to 10 minutes more. Remove the skillet from the oven and invert the cornbread onto a cutting board. Cut into wedges and serve with butter and honey or apple butter.