

MASCARPONE & PARMIGIANO POLENTA

Serves four to six as a side dish.

- 2 teaspoons kosher salt; more to taste**
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal**
- ½ cup mascarpone (or 3 ounces cream cheese plus 1 tablespoon heavy cream)**
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**

In a heavy stainless-steel 3-quart saucepan, bring 4 cups water to a boil. Add the salt and stir with a wooden spoon to dissolve. Follow the basic soft polenta method at left, omitting the butter at the end. Gently whisk in the mascarpone (or, if you're using cream cheese, whisk it with the cream in a bowl before adding it

to the polenta). Turn off the heat and stir in ½ cup of the Parmigiano. Thin the polenta with up to ½ cup water, if you like; add salt to taste. Scoop the polenta into a serving bowl, sprinkle with the remaining Parmigiano, and serve.

POLENTA ROSA (TOMATO POLENTA)

Serves four to six as a side dish.

This variation uses the juices from the tomatoes as part of the cooking liquid.

- 1 cup canned diced tomatoes, with their juices**
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt; more to taste**
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal**
- ½ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, finely diced**

- ¼ cup concentrated tomato paste (preferably Italian)**
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh oregano or ¼ teaspoon dried (optional)**

Put the tomatoes in a fine sieve set over a bowl and shake it to drain as much liquid as possible. Put the tomato liquid in a measuring cup; add water to get 4 cups total liquid. Pour the liquid into a heavy stainless-steel 3-quart saucepan, add the salt, and proceed with basic soft polenta method at left, omitting the butter.

When the polenta is thick and creamy, set it over low heat, whisk in the sun-dried tomatoes and add the tomato paste and the canned tomatoes. Add the oregano, if using, and salt to taste, and serve.

Or try stirring in:

- ❖ A tablespoon or two of chopped fresh sage, thyme, oregano, tarragon, or chives.
- ❖ Grated cheeses such as Fontina, Cheddar, or Parmesan, or crumbled goat cheese.

Or serve topped with:

- ❖ A saucy ragoût or stir-fry of vegetables or meat.
- ❖ Sautéed greens with garlic and pancetta
- ❖ A mix of mushrooms, sautéed, seasoned with fresh herbs, and deglazed with cream.

Alan Tardi was the chef-owner of Follonico in New York City. ♦