

*A Recipe From Chef Shelley Handler*

# POLENTA WITH WILD MUSHROOM RED SAUCE

---

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR THE POLENTA

- 1 cup yellow corn meal, medium grind
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 - 3 cups water
- Salt
- 2 tablespoons butter or extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 - 1 cup grated Pecorino

### FOR THE WILD MUSHROOM SAUCE

- 1.5 ounces dried, sliced porcini mushrooms
- 3 cups very hot water
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic

### SAUCE CONT.

- 4 anchovy fillets, chopped fine
- 1/2 teaspoon red chili flakes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/2 cup red wine, optional
- 1/2 - 3/4 cup porcini soaking liquid
- 1 28 oz can of Bianco di Napoli or San Marzano tomatoes, crush or chop by hand
- 1/2 - 1 teaspoon dried sage, or Greek oregano
- 1/2 - 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2 - 3 tablespoons butter or extra virgin olive oil
- Freshly grated Pecorino Romano
- Freshly ground black pepper

## INSTRUCTIONS

Mix cornmeal with stock and 2 cups of water and a good pinch of salt in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan or dutch oven. Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring constantly with whisk or wooden spoon. Continue to stir for 2-3 minutes. Turn heat to low, stir with wooden spoon every 4-5 minutes. At about 20 minutes test polenta by putting a dab on a small plate, let it cool a bit and taste. The meal should be tender and there should be no bitterness. If it is chewy or bitter, continue to cook until it reaches the proper consistency and flavor, stirring as before. If the polenta gets too thick, add up to a cup as needed, stirring as before. When the polenta is ready, stir in the Pecorino, olive oil, and adjust salt if needed.

Serve immediately, or pour into 9" x 13" well-greased baking dish and let cool.

If serving sauce over firm, previously-cooled polenta, cut into rectangles (or any shape that pleases you) and brown in a non-stick pan with some extra virgin olive oil.

For the sauce, place porcini in a medium bowl and soak in hot water until mushrooms soften, about 25-30 minutes. Skim the mushrooms from the soaking liquid, chop coarsely and set aside. Strain the mushroom liquid through a coffee filter or a paper towel-lined strainer. Squeeze filter to strain any remaining liquid, and discard filter. Set liquid aside.

In a large saute pan, add olive oil over medium heat. Add onions and saute until translucent and slightly browned at the edges, 5-8 minutes.

Add chili flakes and anchovies, stirring until anchovies start to dissolve.

Add garlic and stir until anchovies fully dissolve and and garlic is fragrant. Do not let garlic brown.

## INSTRUCTIONS CONT.

Add the porcini and tomato paste, stirring until fragrant. Add wine (or use some porcini soaking liquid or chicken stock), let reduce a few minutes while scraping up the bits stuck to the pan.

Add tomatoes, ½ cup mushroom liquid, salt and sage

Raise flame to medium high, bring ingredients to a boil and lower to a simmer. Stir, meanwhile crushing tomato pieces with the back of a large spoon or potato masher.

Simmer until tomatoes break down and flavors come together, 20-30 minutes.

Add 2 tablespoons of butter or extra virgin olive oil, stir well. Adjust seasonings, adding salt and chili flakes as needed

Serve over hot polenta. Top with abundant grated Pecorino Romano and a few grinds of black pepper

This sauce is also excellent over pasta such as rigatoni or bucatini. If cooked down a bit more, it is delicious on pizza. If you use it on pizza, top with a small amount of mozzarella. Once the pizza comes out, add large flakes of Pecorino Romano and a grind of black pepper.

---

## ABOUT CHEF SHELLEY HANDLER

Shelley has over 40 years of professional culinary experience, ranging from chef of Chez Panisse Cafe to nearly a decade of teaching aspiring chefs at the California Culinary Academy. She uses the best local ingredients to create simple, healthful meals with big flavor. Since 1993, Shelley's been writing for food websites, magazines, and catalogs, and lends her brain to food product development for large food corporations. She's passionate about healthful, sustainable, earth-loving food and education for school kids, working with numerous Bay Areas after-school programs.

