

**September 2019**

**CORN MEAL:**

**Custard Cornbread**

**Fried Breaded Mushrooms in the Style of  
Howard Johnson's Amazing Fried Clams**

**Ivorian Coffee Corn Meal Cookies**

**Slow Cooker *Polenta* with Dried Mushrooms**

**Tomato Cheese *Polenta* Pie**

**Two-Bean Chili with Corn Meal Dumplings**

During the preparation of my manuscript for *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*, I encountered many creative third world cooks for whom corn meal was a life-sustaining staple. Corn and corn meal form a significant portion of the diet of those living in countries like Zimbabwe. A custard corn meal dessert is a treasured gift of a Zimbabwean cook. A corn meal pudding from São Tome and Principe is another dessert that often appears on our table. Cornbreads from African cooks and cooks in every country in this hemisphere filled my files, each a little different. I still make a colonial-style loaf which I have adapted to my bread machine and a bread machine version of a Portuguese country bread we first tasted while traveling in the mountains of Portugal.

Corn was dried by all of the native peoples of our hemisphere. The growing season was short and provisions for the winter were a first consideration. Corn hung in long braids from the rafters of the long houses of the Iroquois and handfuls of corn kernels and dried beans were added to the pot hanging over the centrally located fire. Moisture returned to the corn and beans as it stewed along with roots and meats. Peoples of the Iroquois Nation also ground the dried corn and combined it with nutmeals, especially ground hazelnuts to make breads, breads much like the hoe cakes baked in the southern regions of what would become the United States. Native peoples in Mesoamerica ground the dried corn and made flat cakes, *tortillas*. The corn meal was combined with meat and vegetables and wrapped in corn leaves to make *tamales*.

Corn meal is a practical way to carry the nutrition of dried corn through the year but when climate conditions limit the crop as has happened in Africa where desertification has advanced and wars frequently disrupt agriculture, that reserve may not be enough. Organizations that provide food aid to countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, have increased their inventory of corn meal. Several women in those effective areas wrote about the decrease in millet as their lands dried and literally blew away. For decades, rice had been the primary grain support, in part, because it could be prepared in much the same way women prepared millet. Corn meal increased their options. One woman wrote that she loved the taste of corn but still saved it for special dishes.



*Polenta*, essentially a Northern Italian dish, and *mamaliga* from Romania are classics but they often challenge the young cook. The first time I cut my *mamaliga* with a wire, as instructed, I did not get the clean cut promised. It took a long time for me to achieve the correct consistency to achieve that clean cut. The updated *polenta* recipes included here are, albeit a bit

unorthodox, much less challenging or check out the Gambian version of *polenta* that I included on p. 99 of volume II of my book. Another favorite recipe, in which corn meal is an important tribute to this important grain, is the classic colonial Indian pudding, found in volume II of my *Worldwide Vegetarian Journey* . . . on pp. 670-71. Handed down from generation to generation, it is a special dish for Thanksgiving that can spark conversation about the journey from Plimouth Plantation to our dining rooms.

## CUSTARD CORNBREAD

TPT - 1 hour

*This makes a wonderful breakfast or brunch offering . . . warm, soft, and creamy. It is also a nice choice over which to serve a ragoût or a stew such as chili or ratatouille*

**1/4 cup unbleached white flour**  
**1 1/3 tablespoons whole wheat flour**  
**1/4 cup yellow corn meal**  
**1/4 teaspoon baking powder**  
**1/4 teaspoon baking soda**

**3 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs**  
**2 teaspoons butter—*melted***

**1 1/2 teaspoons sugar**  
**2/3 cup skimmed milk**  
**1 1/2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar**

**1/3 cup light cream or half and half**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a **7 x 3 x 2-inch loaf pan** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Into a small mixing bowl, sift white and whole wheat flours, corn meal, baking powder, and baking soda. Set aside until required.

In a mixing bowl, using a wire whisk, beat pasteurized eggs lightly. *Gradually* beat in *melted* butter and continue beating until well-combined.

Add sugar, milk, and vinegar. Beat well.

Using a wooden spoon, stir sifted dry ingredients into egg mixture. Stir until the batter is free of lumps but *do not overstir*.

Pour batter into prepared dish or pan. Pour down the center of the batter. *Do not stir!*

Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for 45 minutes, or until *lightly browned*.

*Serve warm.*

Yields 6 slices

Note: Leftovers *can not* be successfully reheated.



1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.3 g.; FAT = 2.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.8 g.;  
CALORIES = 78; CALORIES FROM FAT = 29%

## FRIED, BREADED MUSHROOMS IN THE STYLE OF HOWARD JOHNSON'S AMAZING FRIED CLAMS

TPT - 8 hours and 20 minutes;  
10 minutes = liquid flavoring soak for mushrooms;  
8 hours = mushroom rehydration period

*Howard Johnson's was quite an exciting restaurant for a child of my era. America had just emerged from the Great Depression and was engaged in war in Europe and in the Pacific. Unlike today's almost endless fast food restaurant choices, there were only three fast food options other than sandwich counters in department stores and ten-cent stores. There were two really special hot dog stands, Don and Bob's and Vic and Irv's, up on Lake Ontario, several pizzerias in downtown Rochester, and Hojo's at "twelve corners" in Brighton. Howard Johnson's twenty-eight flavor choices of ice cream and fried clams piled high in a buttered and toasted New England-style hot dog roll became a very special treat; now long gone, sadly. That sensational crunchy sandwich can be revisited with this vegetarian version.*

**1 cup dried straw mushrooms pieces—preferably caps—well-rinsed\***  
**3 cups boiling water**

**1/4 cup skimmed evaporated milk**  
**1/4 cup sea broth\*\***  
**2 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs**  
**1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**1/2 teaspoon Bragg Liquid Aminos\*\*\***

**1/2 cup cake flour**  
**1/2 cup yellow cornmeal**

**Oil for deep-frying\*\*\*\***

Put dried mushrooms in a bowl or large measuring cup. Pour *boiling* water over. Place a small bowl on top to keep mushrooms under water. Allow to soak for at least 8 hours. Drain. Slice mushroom pieces into strips. Turn into a mixing bowl.

Heat oil over *MEDIUM* heat to about 360 degrees F.

While oil is heating, pour evaporated milk, sea broth, pasteurized eggs, vanilla extract, and liquid aminos over mushroom strips. Allow to soak for at least 10 minutes.

In another mixing bowl, combine cake flour and cornmeal. Stir to mix.

When ready to prepare, using tongs, lift mushroom strips from the soaking liquid and transfer to the dry flour–cornmeal mixture. Using your clean hands, toss the mushrooms around until well-coated. Carefully lift from the breading mixture and add to the hot oil. Using a chopstick, stir to immerse the breaded mushrooms in the oil. When evenly browned, using tongs, lift the mushrooms to paper toweling to drain. Fry in several batches if necessary.

Serve on toasted and buttered, top-sliced hot dog rolls or directly onto a warmed dinner plate. Serve with tartar sauce.\*\*\*\*\*



Yields 4 servings

Notes: \*Avoid rehydrating mushrooms with large, thick stems. The caps are far more suitable for this recipe.

**\*\***My sea broth recipe, which appears on p. 411 of volume II of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*, is a simple, easily prepared sea vegetable stock which can be canned using a water-pack canner or frozen. It is an invaluable tool in my “taste of the sea” adventures and a perfect broth for a simple Asian soup.

**\*\*\***Bragg Liquid Aminos, available in most well-stocked groceries and in natural food stores, give a slight “fishy” nuance to this dish.

**\*\*\*\***Instead of throwing out the oil after you have used it to deep-fry or have it go rancid in your cupboard before you use it again, allow it to cool, remove any bits of food that might still be in the oil by pouring it through a fine sieve several times, pour the filtered oil into a freezer container or canning jar with a tightly-fitting lid, and freeze until you need it again. I have used frozen oil for deep-frying as much as six months later.

**\*\*\*\*\***I posted my tartar sauce in January 2019 [*see recipe archives*].

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.8 g.; FAT = 4.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 23.2 g.;  
CALORIES = 147; CALORIES FROM FAT = 26%

## IVORIAN COFFEE CORN MEAL COOKIES

*Kyekyire Paano*

TPT - 42 minutes

*I received this recipe from a generous cook when I inquired about grains grown in the Ivory Coast. Toasting the corn meal greatly enhances the corn flavor and mixing it with wheat flour gives the cookies excellent texture. Be sure to use yellow corn meal. It gives the finished cookies a beautiful golden color that can not be achieved with white corn meal.*

**1/2 cup yellow corn meal**

**3/4 cup unbleached white flour**

**1/4 cup sugar**

**1 teaspoon freeze-dried coffee granules**

**1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg**

**1/4 teaspoon salt**

**1/4 cup cold butter—chopped**

**1/4 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)**

**3/4 teaspoon grated organic lemon zest**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare cookie sheet by lining with parchment paper.

Spread the corn meal in a jelly roll pan. Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven, stirring frequently, for about 15 minutes, or until lightly browned. Turn into the work bowl of the food processor fitted with steel knife.

Add flour, sugar, coffee granules, nutmeg, and salt to toasted corn meal in work bowl. Process to combine.

Add diced, cold butter. Process until mixture resembles coarse farina.

Add pasteurized eggs and grated lemon zest. Process until dough forms. Using two teaspoons, drop dough on parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake in 350-degrees F. oven for 12 minutes, or until lightly browned. Using a spatula, transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Store in an airtight tin.

Yields about 14 cookies

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.



1/14 SERVING (i. e., per cookie) –  
PROTEIN = 1.5 g.; FAT = 3.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 12.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 86; CALORIES FROM FAT = 37%

## SLOW COOKER *POLENTA* WITH DRIED MUSHROOMS

### *Polenta con Funghi*

TPT - 6 hours and 20 minutes;  
2 hours = chilling period:  
[slow cooker: about 6 hours on LOW\*]

*Think polenta; it's a great way to start an Italian or Romanian menu. You really do not have to run to the market to pick up a tube of polenta or plan the time to make it from scratch. The slow cooker method is a remarkable tool on a busy day and uses a whole lot less energy than driving to town or making polenta the traditional way. I find it convenient to make it when I have time and chill it in the loaf pan overnight or for even a day or two to accommodate our schedule.*

**1 1/2 teaspoons butter**

**Pinch Hungarian sweet paprika**

**Several dashes ground red pepper (cayenne)**

**1 1/2 cups boiling water**

**1/2 cup yellow corn meal**

**1 tablespoon very finely chopped dried mushrooms**

*—any dried mushroom variety that you have on hand will do*

**1 1/2 teaspoons butter—melted**

**1/4 teaspoon salt**



**1 1/2 teaspoons butter**

Using 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls of butter, coat the bowl of the slow cooker.

Sprinkle the paprika and ground red pepper (cayenne) into the bowl.

Preheat slow cooker to *HIGH*.

Add *boiling* water, corn meal, *finely* chopped dried mushrooms, the 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls *melted* butter, and salt. Stir well. Cover. *Reduce temperature to LOW*. Cook on *LOW* for 6 hours, stirring occasionally.\*

Spoon into a **5 1/2 x 3 x 2-inch non-stick-coated loaf or paté pan** which has been coated with non-stick lecithin spray coating. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours.\* Turn out onto bread board. Slice as many 1/4-inch slices as you will need. Return loaf pan, covered with plastic wrap, to the refrigerator.



In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt remaining 1 1/2 teaspoons of butter. Fry *polenta* slices until browned. Using a spatula, transfer to a heated serving platter.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 8 slices

Notes: \*I generally refrigerate the *polenta* overnight.

The six-hour cooking period produces a texture which we prefer. However, it can be prepared in two to three hours at *HIGH*.

This recipe can be doubled, when required. Use a 7 x 3 x 2-inch loaf pan when doubling.

1/8 SERVING (i. e., per slice) –  
PROTEIN = 0.7 g.; FAT = 2.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 6.0 g.:  
CALORIES = 48; CALORIES FROM FAT = 45%

## **TOMATO CHEESE *POLENTA* PIE**

TPT - 1 hour and 32 minutes

*We evolved this to serve when our guests were meat-eaters and somewhat apprehensive of our chosen lifestyle. More often than not, we would be asked for a repeat of this one. It is still a family favorite. Though pizza-like in general flavor, the texture and nutritional values are surprisingly and pleasantly different.*

**3/4 cup vegetarian stock of choice**

**1/8 teaspoon freshly ground *white* pepper**

**1/4 cup yellow corn meal**

**1 tablespoon butter**

**1/4 cup *fat-free* pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)**

**1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese *or pecorino Romano* cheese, as preferred**

**1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese *or pecorino Romano* cheese, as preferred**

**1/4 cup (about 1 ounce) shredded, young, *smoked*, slicing *provolone* cheese**

**2 large, fresh, ripe plum tomatoes**

**1/2 teaspoon dried basil—crushed**

**1/2 teaspoon dried oregano—crushed**

**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

**1/2 teaspoon butter**

**1/4 cup *thinly* sliced scallions**

Prepare a **7-inch pie plate or *quiche* dish** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

In the top half of the double boiler set over direct heat, bring stock to the boil. Place over boiling water. Add *white* pepper and corn meal. Cook until *very thick*, stirring often with a wooden spoon to insure smoothness—about 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Remove thickened *polenta* mixture from heat. Stir in 1 tablespoonful butter and pasteurized eggs. When thoroughly integrated, stir in 1 tablespoonful grated cheese.

Spread mixture evenly into prepared pie plate. Sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoonful cheese.\*

Bake in preheated oven for about 25 minutes, until hot and *golden brown with crisp edges*.

While *polenta* is baking, prepare shredded *provolone* cheese. Set aside.

Slice tomatoes into crosswise slices. Set aside.

Combine basil, oregano, and black pepper in a mortar. Grind to uniform consistency with pestle. Set aside.

In a small skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt 1/2 teaspoonful butter. Add scallion slices and sauté gently for 3-4 minutes. Set aside.



Sprinkle the shredded *provolone* cheese evenly over the surface of the baked *polenta* pie. Arrange tomato slices over cheese, slightly overlapping in a spiral pattern. Sprinkle blended seasonings evenly over tomatoes. Scatter sautéed scallion slices over assembled pie.

Bake in preheated 325-degree F. oven for about 20 minutes, until cheese is melted and dish is heated through.

*Serve at once*, cut into wedges.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: \*This may be prepared ahead to this point and refrigerated until baking time. Bring to room temperature before baking.

This recipe can be doubled, when required. Use a 9-inch pie plate when doubling.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 6.2 g.; FAT = 7.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 9.6 g.;  
CALORIES = 126; CALORIES FROM FAT = 51%



## TWO-BEAN *CHILI* WITH CORN MEAL DUMPLINGS

TPT - 1 hour and 33 minutes

*A piece of notebook paper, covered with notes and ideas, surfaced one day and the ideas became interesting all over again. The result is a chili that is chockful of vegetables, not your conventional chili, in which dumplings are poached that are not your conventional dumplings. Protein complementation and enough vegetables for a whole day all in one bowl . . . how very, very nice . . .*

1 1/2 teaspoons *extra virgin* olive oil  
1 large onion—chopped  
2 garlic cloves—*very finely* chopped

1 large red bell pepper—chopped  
1 *small* zucchini—chopped  
1 *small* yellow summer squash—peeled, seeded, and chopped  
1 large celery rib—sliced

1 teaspoon chili powder, or to taste\*  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano—crushed

3/4 cup water  
1 cup canned, *diced* tomatoes—*undrained*  
1 cup black beans—*undrained*  
1 cup pinto beans—*undrained*  
1 1/2 teaspoons tomato paste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

### DUMPLINGS:

1/4 cup unbleached white flour  
1/4 cup yellow corn meal  
1 teaspoon baking powder

1 tablespoon butter—*melted*

2 tablespoons (1/2 ounce) *sharp* Cheddar cheese—shredded

1 tablespoon chopped fresh coriander (*cilantro*)

About 1/4 cup skimmed milk

In a heavy kettle, with cover, set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Add chopped onion and garlic. Sauté gently until onion is soft and translucent, *being careful not to allow onion to brown*.

Add chopped red peppers, zucchini and yellow summer squashes, and celery. Continue sautéing for a minute or two.

Add chili powder, ground cumin, and crushed, dried oregano. Cook, stirring constantly, for another minute or two.

Add water, *undrained* tomatoes, black beans, and pinto beans, tomato paste, and black pepper to sautéed vegetables and seasonings. Combine *gently*, but *thoroughly*. Bring to the boil, turn heat to *LOW*, cover tightly, and simmer for 45 minutes. Stir occasionally during cooking period. Remove cover and continue cooking, stirring frequently, until thickened to your liking.\*\*

In a mixing bowl, combine flour, cornmeal, and baking powder. Stir to combine well.

Add *melted* butter. Stir to form a batter.

Add shredded Cheddar cheese and chopped fresh coriander (*cilantro*). Stir to combine well. Add milk, *1 tablespoonful at a time*, until a soft batter is formed.

Drop batter by tablespoonfuls onto bubbling *chili*. Allow dumplings to simmer for 10 minutes. Cover kettle tightly and allow dumplings to steam for an additional 10 minutes.

Turn into heated serving bowl and serve into heated soup bowls.



Yields 6 servings

Notes: \*Chipotle chili powder gives this vegetable mixture a wonderful smoky nuance. However, be forewarned, some chili powders, based exclusively on the chipotle chili pepper, can be very HOT. Experiment and increase with caution.

\*\*The flavor actually improves if this is prepared to this point the day before serving.

This recipe can be halved, when required, but we like to make this six-serving recipe. Since this *chili* freezes most successfully, two more meals will be in the freezer for future menu plans.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 9.9 g.; FAT = 4.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 35.6 g.;  
CALORIES = 177; CALORIES FROM FAT = 22%

*The corn harvest is in here in Pennsylvania.*

*Our canning shelves and our freezers are full. Our herbs have been dried.*

*I am gathering a harvest of recipes for you for next month.*

*After all, it is fall again. Please drop by,*

*Judy*

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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