



Creamy Butternut Squash Polenta Noel

The Heart of the Kitchen

My kitchen is my favorite room. It is always warm and full of smells. Today, it smells like roasting squash. Doesn't that smell amazing?

This dish is like a hug in a bowl. It mixes sweet squash with creamy polenta. That matters because food should make you feel good inside. It is simple, real food. What is your favorite cozy food? I would love to know.

A Little Story About Squash

I once grew a butternut squash that was huge. It was bigger than my

cat! I was so proud. I still laugh at that.

Roasting it is the secret. The oven makes it sweet and soft. You just scoop out the golden flesh. It becomes like sunshine in a bowl. *Fun fact: The longer you roast squash, the sweeter it gets. The heat turns its starches into sugar!*

Why We Whisk and Wait

Polenta needs patience. You must stir it slowly. Then you let it sit, covered, on low heat. This is not a fast food.

That quiet cooking time matters. It teaches us to slow down. Good things take a little time. The grains soak up the water and become creamy. Do you like to stir pots? I find it very peaceful.

Bringing It All Together

Now, stir the sunny squash into the polenta. See how the color changes? It becomes a beautiful orange. Add the Parmesan cheese last. It melts right in.

The final touches are the best part. I love the crunch of toasted pepitas. A tiny drizzle of balsamic vinegar is magic. It adds a little tang. Which topping do you think you'd like more: extra cheese or the crunchy seeds?

A Dish for Sharing

This is not a fancy meal. It is a humble, hearty one. It feeds a family without much fuss. That is its real magic.

Food connects us. Making a pot of something warm to share says "I

care.” That matters more than any recipe. Will you try making this for someone you love? I hope you do.

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Butternut squash	1 small (1½- to 2-pound)	Halved lengthwise, seeds removed
Cold-pressed extra-virgin olive oil	1 tablespoon	Plus extra for serving
Salt and pepper		To taste
Onion	1 small	Chopped fine
Fresh sage	1 ½ teaspoons	Minced
Ground nutmeg	⅛ teaspoon	
Water	5 cups	
Bay leaf	1	
Baking soda	Pinch	
Whole-grain coarse-ground cornmeal	1 cup	
Parmesan cheese	1 ounce (½ cup grated)	Plus extra for serving
Pepitas	2 tablespoons	Toasted
Balsamic vinegar		For drizzling



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This dish feels like a cozy hug. I call it my “Polenta Noel” for festive nights. The squash becomes so sweet in the oven. Doesn’t that smell amazing? It mixes right into the creamy cornmeal.

See also Festive Madeleine Cookie Wreath

My grandson calls it “sunshine porridge.” I still laugh at that. It’s simple food made special. You just need a little patience for stirring. The result is pure, golden comfort.

Instructions

Step 1: Heat your oven to 400 degrees. Brush the squash halves with oil. Season them with salt and pepper. Place them cut-side down on a foil-lined pan. Roast until very soft and golden brown. This takes about 45 minutes. (The foil makes cleanup a breeze later).

Step 2: Let the squash cool for ten minutes. Then scoop the soft flesh into a bowl. Just leave the skin behind. It has done its job. You should have a nice bowl of orange mash.

Step 3: Now, heat oil in a big pot. Cook the chopped onion until it’s soft. Add the sage and nutmeg. It will smell like the holidays! Pour in the water and add the bay leaf. Slowly rain in the cornmeal while you stir. **Why do we stir constantly here? Share below!**

Step 4: Reduce the heat to very low. Cover the pot. Let it cook quietly for five minutes. Then give it a good whisk to smooth lumps. Cover it again. Let it cook for 25 more minutes, whisking now and then.

Step 5: Stir your lovely squash mash into the polenta. Let it warm together for five minutes. Turn off the heat. Stir in the Parmesan cheese. Let it sit, covered, for a final five minutes. (This waiting time makes it extra creamy).

Creative Twists

Apple & Sausage: Top it with crispy sausage bits and diced apple.

Maple Brown Butter: Drizzle with warm, nutty brown butter and maple syrup.

Green & Herby: Stir in chopped spinach and a sprinkle of fresh thyme.

Which one would you try first? Comment below!

Serving & Pairing Ideas

This polenta is a perfect bowl on its own. I love a simple green salad on the side. For crunch, add those toasted pepitas on top. A final drizzle of balsamic vinegar is magic. It adds a little tangy sweetness.

For a drink, warm apple cider is wonderful. Grown-ups might enjoy a glass of dry white wine. Both pair nicely with the squash's sweetness.

Which would you choose tonight?



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Keeping Your Cozy Polenta

This polenta is a wonderful friend to have on hand. Let it cool completely first. Then, pop it into an airtight container. It will be happy in your fridge for about four days. You can also freeze it for a month. Just use a freezer-safe container. Thaw it in the fridge overnight when you are ready.

See also Citrus Spice Cranberry Glaze

To reheat, add a splash of water or milk to a saucepan. Stir the polenta over low heat until warm. This keeps it creamy. I once reheated it without extra liquid. It got too thick! A little liquid fixes everything. Batch cooking this means a warm dinner is always minutes away. That matters on busy nights. It turns a hectic evening into a cozy one.

Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!

Polenta Peace of Mind

First, lumps can happen when you add the cornmeal. Pour it in a slow, steady stream. Keep stirring as you pour. I remember when I dumped it all in at once. We had a lumpy surprise! Second, the polenta might stick to the pan. Whisk it well every few minutes. Scrape the bottom and sides. This prevents a burnt layer.

Third, the final texture might seem too thin. Do not worry. It thickens a lot as it sits off the heat. Letting it rest is the secret. Getting a smooth texture builds your cooking confidence. Letting it rest ensures perfect flavor and creaminess. These small steps make a big difference.

Which of these problems have you run into before?

Your Quick Questions, Answered

Q: Is this gluten-free?

A: Yes! Cornmeal is naturally gluten-free. Just check your other ingredients to be sure.

Q: Can I make it ahead?

A: Absolutely. Make it fully, cool it, and store it. Reheat with a little extra liquid.

Q: What if I don't have fresh sage?

A: Use ½ teaspoon of dried rubbed sage instead. It will still taste lovely.

Q: Can I double the recipe?

A: You can, but use a very large pot. Stirring will be your best friend.

Q: Are the toppings important?

A: The pepitas add a nice crunch. The balsamic adds a sweet tang. I highly recommend them! *Fun fact: Pepitas are just pumpkin seeds without the white shell.*

Which tip will you try first?

From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope this recipe brings warmth to your table. It is a hug in a bowl. I love making it as the days get shorter. It fills the kitchen with the best smell. Cooking is about sharing and creating memories.

I would be so delighted to see your creation. Show me your beautiful bowls. **Have you tried this recipe? Tag us on Pinterest!** You can



find me at @ElowensKitchenNook. I cannot wait to see what you make.

See also Melting Moments Holiday Cookies

Happy cooking!
—Elowen Thorn.



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BUTTERNUT SQUASH
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Author: Elowen Thorn



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Cooking Method: [Roasting](#) [Stovetop](#)



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Difficulty: **Beginner**



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Prep time: **15 minutes**



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Cook time: **1 hour 20 minutes**



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Rest time: **10 minutes**



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Total time: **1 hour 45 minutes**



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Servings: **4 servings**



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Calories: **280 kcal**

Best Season: **Summer**

Description

A rich and comforting dish featuring roasted butternut squash blended

into creamy, savory polenta, finished with Parmesan, pepitas, and balsamic.

Ingredients

- ☐ 1 small (1½- to 2-pound) butternut squash, halved lengthwise, seeds removed
- ☐ 1 tablespoon cold-pressed extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for serving
- ☐ Salt and pepper
- ☐ 1 small onion, chopped fine
- ☐ 1 ½ teaspoons minced fresh sage
- ☐ ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ☐ 5 cups water
- ☐ 1 bay leaf
- ☐ Pinch baking soda
- ☐ 1 cup whole-grain coarse-ground cornmeal
- ☐ 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup), plus extra for serving
- ☐ 2 tablespoons pepitas, toasted
- ☐ Balsamic vinegar

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil. Brush cut sides of squash with 1½ teaspoons oil, season with ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper, and place cut sides down on prepared baking sheet. Roast until fork inserted into center meets little resistance and sides touching sheet are deep golden brown, 40 to 50 minutes.
2. Remove squash from oven and let cool for 10 minutes. Scoop flesh of squash into medium bowl and set aside; discard skin.

3. Heat remaining 1½ teaspoons oil in large saucepan over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and ¾ teaspoon salt and cook until softened and lightly browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Add sage and nutmeg and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in water, bay leaf, ¼ teaspoon pepper, and baking soda and bring to boil. Slowly pour cornmeal into water in steady stream while stirring back and forth with wooden spoon or rubber spatula. Bring mixture to boil, stirring constantly, about 1 minute. Reduce heat to lowest setting and cover.
4. After 5 minutes, whisk polenta to smooth out any lumps that may have formed, about 15 seconds. (Make sure to scrape down sides and bottom of saucepan.) Cover and continue to cook, whisking occasionally, until polenta grains are tender but slightly al dente, about 25 minutes longer.
5. Stir in cooked squash, increase heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until squash is well incorporated, about 5 minutes.
6. Off heat, stir in Parmesan and season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and let sit for 5 minutes. Serve, topping individual portions with extra Parmesan, pepitas, and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar.

Notes

For a smoother polenta, you can blend the cooked squash before stirring it in. Leftovers can be refrigerated and reheated with a splash of water or milk to loosen.

Keywords: Butternut Squash, Polenta, Vegetarian, Comfort Food, Fall