

Fried Polenta and Porcini on Roasted Carrot Purée

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polenta cakes

3 cups water
1/2 tsp salt
1 cup coarse polenta
1 tbsp butter, unsalted
2 tbsps vegetable oil
salt for seasoning

roasted carrot purée

based on a recipe from [Food and Wine](#)

1 lb. carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch dice
1 tbsp vegetable oil
pinch of dried thyme (1/2 tsp fresh thyme, chopped)
1/3 cup water
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
salt to taste

seared porcini with reduction sauce

2 cups fresh mushrooms, sliced 1/4-inch thick (I used 2 palm-sized fresh porcini)
2 tbsps butter, unsalted
salt to taste
1/2 cup dry white wine (I used chardonnay)

Make the polenta cakes: Bring 3 cups of water and the 1/2 teaspoon of salt to a boil in a medium saucepan. Reduce the heat to a simmer and stir in the polenta. Stir the polenta at a simmer for 20-30 minutes until the polenta is tender, reducing heat as necessary. It may bubble and splatter. Stir continuously to prevent scorching. When the polenta is ready, pour it into a 9x9-inch baking pan. Smooth the surface by placing a sheet of plastic wrap on top and pressing it down until the top is more or less even. Let the polenta cool (about an hour or can be refrigerated until ready to use).

When the polenta has cooled completely, turn it out onto a cutting surface and slice the polenta into squares or triangles (I do 16 triangles). Heat the vegetable oil in a frying pan over medium-high heat and place the polenta cakes in the oil (leave enough space so you can get in there with a spatula to flip them). You may need to fry in 2 batches like I did. Fry until the bottoms are just golden and carefully flip them over. Sprinkle with a little salt to taste. Remove to a serving plate when the other side has turned golden. These can be refrigerated for up to 3 days and reheated in a 250°F oven, covered in foil, for 10-15 minutes.

Make the roasted carrot purée: Preheat oven to 375°F. In a medium bowl, toss the diced carrots, vegetable oil, and thyme together. Pour the carrots onto a baking sheet or into a baking dish so that the cubes are in a single layer. Roast for 45 minutes until the carrots are fork tender. Remove from oven. Place the carrots in a food processor or high-powered blender. Add the water and olive oil and blitz until the purée is smooth. Season with salt to taste. This will keep in the refrigerator for up to 3 days (or longer). Reheat the purée in a saucepan over low heat.

Sauté the mushrooms and make the reduction sauce: Dry fry the mushrooms in a sauté pan over medium-high heat for a few minutes per side. This helps to get rid of some excess moisture in the mushrooms. Add 1 tablespoon of butter to the hot pan and swirl it around as it melts (add more if needed). Let the mushroom slices brown on the bottoms (a couple of minutes), then flip them over with tongs and sprinkle a little salt over the mushrooms. Cook for another 2 minutes or until the bottoms have browned. Remove the mushrooms from the pan.

Add the remaining tablespoon of butter to the pan and use a spatula to scrape at the browned bits of fond. When the butter has melted and begins sizzling, pour the wine into the pan all at once. Stir the liquid and scrape up the fond until it dissolves into the wine. Let the wine boil down until you have a brown sauce (like 3 tablespoons). Remove from heat.

Assembly: Spoon the carrot purée onto a plate or into a bowl, then set 3-4 polenta cakes on top of the purée. Top the polenta with mushroom slices and then drizzle a little reduction sauce on top. Sprinkle with flake sea salt and serve. Serves 4.