

CORN BREAD

Original recipe from The New Laurel's Kitchen Cookbook,
Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, 1976 and 1986, but adapted by Helen Gunderson.
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Freshly-ground grain is part of the secret of awesome cornbread. I use open-pollinated, yellow dent corn from Paul's Grains of Laurel, Iowa. (<http://www.paulsgrains.com>) But there are certainly other places to get corn—maybe a local farmer—and you can use store bought corn meal as well. Also, blue corn, if you can find it is great for corn bread. And a friend from Practical Farmers of Iowa says that Black Aztec corn is the only kind he uses for corn bread. Also, I have read that pop corn is excellent for corn bread.

I have used the grain mill accessory for my KitchenAid mixer as well as a NutriMill grain mill. The KitchenAid mill provides the best texture, which is somewhat course corn meal. The NutriMill is faster but makes almost too fine of corn meal.

Optional: either the night before or a couple of hours before making the cornbread, stir the cornmeal and buttermilk together and let the mixture sit at room temperature.

Oven temperature: the original recipe says to preheat the oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit; however, I bake with glass pans so that I can view the bottom of the bread to see if it is getting dark enough but not burned. And because baking in glass requires different timing than baking in metal pans—and because my cornbread has gotten burned a little too often—I now set the oven to 375 degrees. You can do your own testing to see what works best for you.

The following is double the size of the original recipe.

4 cups	cornmeal
1 cup	whole wheat pastry flour
2+ teaspoons	salt
1 teaspoon	baking soda
2 teaspoons	baking powder
6 tablespoons	honey
4	large eggs, beaten
4 tablespoons	olive oil (option: other oil or melted butter)
3 ½ cups	buttermilk

Assuming that you have soaked the cornmeal with the buttermilk ahead of time, proceed to stirring the other dry ingredients together, making sure there are no lumps of baking soda or powder. (If you did not pre-mix the meal with milk ahead of time, mix the dry ingredients in one bowl and the liquid ingredients in another bowl. Then combine the dry and liquid mixes.)

If you did presoak the meal and milk, mix the other liquids together and add to the dry ingredients and stir. Then add the cornmeal with buttermilk mixture and stir until smooth. Oil two 8x8-inch pans and turn the batter into them. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

You can also make corn muffins, but reduce the baking time by about two minutes. The good thing with muffins is there is more likelihood that the bread will be cooked evenly without the crust being too brown and the center too wet.

I like to make large muffins in 300 ml (about 1 1/4 cup) Pyrex custard cups, filling each one to the bottom line that goes around the edge of the bowl (about 3/4 cup of batter.) I oil the bowl with Pam spray olive oil. Using products from aerosol cans is probably not the best thing environmentally, but it sure works great for the muffins.