

## **Polenta with Leeks and Gorgonzola, Garnished with Caramelized Fennel and Onions**

("The New Vegetarian Epicure" Anna Thomas)

2 large white fennel bulbs  
3 large yellow onions  
5 Tbsp fruity green olive oil  
salt and pepper to taste  
2/3 cup dry red wine  
2 very large leeks, white only (about 1 ½ cups, sliced)  
1 tsp butter  
6-7 cups any low-salt vegetable broth  
1 cup coarse or regular polenta (yellow cornmeal)  
3 oz Gorgonzola cheese  
chopped flat-leaf parsley

Trim the fennel bulbs, wash them well, cut them in half lengthwise, and then slice them about ½ inch thick. Peel the onions and slice them the same way.

Heat 3 Tbsp of the olive oil in a large non-stick pan and cook the fennel and onion in it slowly, stirring often, adding a little salt and pepper to taste, until they are completely soft and golden brown. Stir in the wine, and continue cooking until it almost all simmers away, then set the pan aside.

Clean the leeks thoroughly, cut them in half lengthwise, then slice them quite thinly crosswise. Heat the remaining olive oil and the butter in a non-stick pan and sauté the leeks in it, stirring them often, until they are soft and beginning to color. Add a little sprinkle of salt-but not too much.

Heat 6 cups of broth in a medium-sized saucepan and whisk in the polenta. Lower the heat and simmer the polenta, stirring with a wooden spoon constantly, or at least very often, until it is thick and smooth, about 30 minutes. Stir in the sautéed leeks; break the Gorgonzola into chunks and stir it in. Keep stirring until the cheese is all melted into the cornmeal. The polenta should be thick and smooth, but not stiff. If it is holding a shape as you stir it, gradually mix in a bit more vegetable broth.

Meanwhile, warm up the caramelized fennel and onion mixture. This too could be moistened with a bit of vegetable broth if needed.

Ladle the polenta into warm, shallow bowls or onto warm plates, and spoon some of the fennel and onion mixture around the polenta. Scatter some fresh flat-leaf parsley across the top and serve at once with a good red wine.

Serves 6

