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the american table

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Lovin' Spoonful Spoonbread

by Mollie Bryan

Relish the American Table is a weekly column that appears in newspapers across the country.

Spoonbread, a heavenly cross between polenta and a cornmeal soufflé, is a sweet, airy puff of smooth corn flavor in your mouth. Part of its marvel is that the texture is so delicate, and the taste combination of egg, corn and sugar is so flavorful, that it wakes up your taste buds. Even though it's called a bread, spoonbread is so pleasantly sweet it can served as dessert for any occasion.

Give this recipe a try.
[Mrs. Rowe's Spoon Bread](#)

Although Native Americans had probably been making the dish for centuries before, Sarah Routledge published a few versions of spoonbread in her 1847 cookbook, *The Carolina Housewife*. She links spoonbread's roots directly to Native Americans, with a traditional Carolina Low Country rendition called Awandaw named for a Native American settlement outside of Charleston.


Another historical mention of spoonbread is in Jeff Smith's *The Frugal Gourmet Cooks American* (William Morrow & Co, 1987). Noting that Virginia Spoonbread was a home staple during the Revolutionary War, he writes, "Spoonbread is simply a very rich and dense cornbread, a dish so dense that it must be served up with a spoon. General Washington loved this dish, and it was apparently served quite often at Mount Vernon (Washington's plantation)."

Some culinary authorities maintain that spoonbread can be traced back to the Indian porridge called suppone or suppawn. Others say that the butter, milk and eggs, which made spoonbread such a special dish, probably came after the Civil War. Whatever the answer, spoonbread makes for a delicious mystery.

Mrs. Rowe's Spoon Bread

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This recipe is taken from the Mollie Bryan's Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant Cookbook: A Lifetime of Recipes from the Shenandoah Valley (Ten Speed Press, 2006).

Ingredients

- 4 cups 2% reduced-fat milk
- 1/2 cup butter, plus more for the dish
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon salt

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Butter a 13 by 9-inch baking dish.
2. Heat milk and butter in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. When milk begins to steam, whisk in cornmeal and cook, whisking constantly, until thoroughly mixed. Remove from heat and cool until thicken slightly.
3. Whisk eggs, sugar, baking powder and salt together in a bowl. Pour into cornmeal mixture; mix well. Scrape into prepared pan.
4. Bake 30 to 40 minutes, until golden brown on top. Serve hot with butter. Makes 10 servings. Serves 12.


Recipe adapted with permission from Mollie Bryan's Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant Cookbook: A Lifetime of Recipes from the Shenandoah Valley (Ten Speed Press, 2006).



Mark Boughton

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Tips from the Test Kitchen

Note: The batter can be refrigerated up to 6 hours before baking, but the baking time increases. Spoonbread reheats well in the microwave, although the consistency is drier.

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 170 calories, 11g fat, 100mg chol., 6g prot., 13g carbs., 1g fiber, 400mg sodium.

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