

# SAVORY POLENTA-RICE PORRIDGE

Makes 6 cups; Serves 4

**REMEMBER, BEST PRACTICE: READ THE RECIPE ALL THE WAY THROUGH BEFORE YOU START COOKING!**

For a slightly creamier porridge, increase rice to 1 cup and decrease polenta to ½ cup. I like using short or medium grain rice for its firmer, pudgy texture, but any rice will work.

As for polenta, go for a coarser grain. And put the instant polenta back on the shelf! A note on whisks: invest in a big, wire whisk. Silicone whisks are unfortunately not your friend in this recipe, or in truth, possibly anywhere.

Serve with: hearty stews, braised meats, roast chicken. Fry an egg on top and add kimchi and cooked greens. Most of all, I love using this base as a conduit for any and all vegetables. Raid the farmers market stands and go wild with roasting and sautéing. Raw, heartier vegetables (think shaved Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and kale salads) are great sitting atop, becoming slightly softened from the heat of the porridge. Next, condiments: chile crisps, harissa, chutney, crème fraîche, capers, and pickles. Herbs, cheeses, nuts, and seeds all make great garnishes, too. It's all about layering textures (and cleaning out your fridge) with a porridge bowl.

Treat this porridge much like you would polenta and rice: finish it with some butter or grated parm.

Note: Every polenta and rice variety is different! You may need to add more liquid to thin to desired consistency at the end. If you find that there is too much liquid (but I think this is unlikely), you can just continue boiling until the liquid has cooked off. In this application, these grains are virtually impossible to overcook.

**1 small onion (or ½ large), peeled**

**1 small piece (1-inch) ginger**

**1 garlic clove, peeled**

**¼ small fennel bulb (optional)**

**2 tablespoons unsalted butter**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**6 cups low-sodium chicken stock or water, or a combination of both**

**¾ cup short or medium-grain rice (I love using sushi or Calrose, but long grain will work, too)**

**¾ cup medium to coarse polenta (not instant)**

**3 sprigs thyme**

1. Place a box grater directly into a large pot. On the largest holes, grate the **onion** directly into the pot. Grate enough **ginger** (no need to peel) to measure ½ **teaspoon packed** and add to the onion. (The flavor of ginger is meant to be super subtle here, but increase if desired.) Grate the **garlic clove** and ¼ **bulb of fennel** (if using) into the pot.

2. Add **2 tablespoons of butter** and place over medium heat. Season with **salt** and **pepper** and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 4-6 minutes. Do not brown.

3. Add **6 cups of chicken stock or water** (or a combination) and bring to a boil over high heat. Add  **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup rice**,  **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup polenta**, and  **$2\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoons salt**, whisking continuously to incorporate. Add **3 sprigs thyme**. Adjust heat to maintain a steady boil and cook, whisking frequently, until the liquid has reduced a bit and the bubbles become bigger on the surface, about 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cover. Continue cooking, whisking vigorously every 5 minutes and being sure to scrape the sides and the bottom of the pot, until the polenta is tender and the rice has broken down and is very soft, about 15-20 minutes more.

4. Adjust consistency to your liking by adding water,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup at a time, keeping in mind that as it sits, the porridge will get more and more firm. In other words, thin out the porridge a bit more than you might instinctually think to do. Taste. Adjust with salt and pepper and serve.

**NOODLE**