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Polenta with All the Greens

Serves 4 to 6

There is a moment as we come into fall when I end up with a serious greens problem. Whereas the bounty in my kitchen once lived on the counter in the form of piles of USE-ME-RIGHT-NOW tomatoes and melons, now we are into the sweet frost-kissed kale and the flowering broccoli raab. Now there are so many beets, each bunch crowned with red-ribbed leaves, as well as kohlrabi and turnip greens, Swiss chard and spicy mustards— all shoved into the fridge precariously, one on top of the other, squeezed between the beer and the yogurt and the leftovers. There are days that I come home from working at the market with bags and bags of them. I don't want to compost good food, and I'm sure I'll think of *some* way to use all these greens.

This super-simple and adaptable dish is the solution. It cooks down and makes use of a large quantity of greens, and the more kinds you combine, the better. This also makes a great breakfast, and I won't argue if you fry an egg for the very top. I also love to give pasta this treatment—I cook the greens the same way and stir them into fettuccine.

If you're not yet an anchovy lover, I urge you not to let that ingredient scare you away here. They are very mellow and contribute a rich saltiness that's hard to identify. I like to buy my anchovies in large round jars packed in oil. They last a long time in the pantry, and the salty oil is a bonus ingredient.

7 cups water

1½ cups polenta

Kosher salt

3 to 4 bunches hearty greens (kale, Swiss chard, beet or turnip greens, kohlrabi greens, etc.), stemmed if necessary, roughly chopped

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

8 to 10 olive-oil-packed anchovies, rinsed and finely chopped

Optional: 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

¾ cup panko or rough homemade bread crumbs

1 tablespoon finely minced garlic (2 to 3 cloves)

2 tablespoons olive oil

¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Freshly ground black pepper



- 1.** Bring 6 cups of the water to a boil in a medium pot. Add the polenta and 1½ teaspoons of salt, stirring gently to distribute the grains through the water. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cover the pot. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the polenta loses its graininess, 35 to 40 minutes. The polenta will get thicker toward the end of the cooking time, so add the remaining cup of water gradually over the last 10 minutes.
- 2.** While the polenta cooks, bring a second large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the greens, bring the water back to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, and cook, stirring often, until the greens are tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Scoop out a cup of cooking water, then drain the greens in a colander. Return the pot to the stove.
- 3.** Melt the butter in the pot set over medium heat. Add the anchovies and cook, stirring often, for about 1 minute. Add the red pepper flakes, if using, and reduce the heat to medium-low.
- 4.** Add the bread crumbs to the anchovies and let them toast, stirring often, until they turn golden and soak up any remaining butter, about 2 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute, stirring often to prevent the bread crumbs from burning. Transfer the bread-crumb mixture to a small bowl and return the pot to medium heat.
- 5.** Return the drained greens to the pot. Stir in the olive oil, three-quarters of the Parmesan, three-quarters of the bread-crumb mixture, lots of fresh pepper, and a splash of the greens' cooking water.
- 6.** Spoon the polenta into a large wide bowl or individual serving bowls and top with the remaining Parmesan. Spoon the greens over the polenta, and sprinkle the remaining bread-crumb mixture over the top.



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