

## BAKED POLENTA WITH GOAT CHEESE

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Rosewater restaurant. | Photo by John Tucker

*By John Tucker*

As sad as it was for me to close Rosewater after 19+ years in business, the timing turned out to be fortuitous, to put it mildly. I miss my staff, and the warm buzz of our

little kitchen, and especially the produce.

Rosewater was ever and always fixated on seasonality. With spring coming I feel particularly wistful that I won't see our ramp purveyor. We worked with him for many years: he'd show up in early spring, and then for about a month or a little more he'd keep us supplied with ramps and fiddlehead ferns he'd hand-harvested near the Delaware River, where New York meets Pennsylvania.

The corn meal in our polenta dishes was grown by a Hudson Valley farmer I worked with for 25 years, first at Savoy in SoHo, then at Rosewater, and I miss that relationship, too. Now I'll have to celebrate the seasons with shopping trips to the Coop and the greenmarket, which is fine, but it feels a little lonesome not to celebrate the seasons with my customers. I look forward to getting together with friends again, and celebrating what the earth gives us on the plate and in the wine glass. That day can't come too soon.

Baked Polenta with Goat Cheese

Ingredients

Polenta

- 4 cups dried, coarse, dry-ground polenta (not instant)

1. 1 quart milk
2. 1 pint cream
3. 1 pint water
4. ½ pound butter
5. ½ cup shaved parmesan
6. 2 sprigs rosemary
7. 5 cloves garlic
8. Salt to taste

## Goat Cheese

- 2 cups fresh goat cheese

9. ½ cup cream
10. ¼ cup olive oil
11. Salt to taste

## Method

In a large soup pot or stock pot, bring milk, cream, water, rosemary, and garlic to a boil, then simmer for +/- 5 minutes. Remove the rosemary and garlic. Slowly whisk in the polenta and constantly stir. The polenta will cook for at least an hour. It will be very thick, soft in the mouth, but still pourable. Melt in the butter and Parmesan, and season with salt to taste. Pour onto a parchment-lined baking pan and spread to until about an inch thick. Refrigerate and let cool completely.

In a mixing bowl, using a wooden spoon or rubber spatula, combine the cheese, cream, olive oil, and salt to taste in a bowl. The mixture should be easy to spread.

Once the polenta has cooled, turn out the baking pan and cut the polenta to whatever portion size you prefer. Spread the softened goat cheese over the top of the portioned polenta. At the restaurant, we'd sprinkle dry bread crumbs, chopped fresh herbs, and finishing sea salt.

Oil a baking sheet with olive oil and place the polenta in a 400-degree oven for about eight minutes, or until hot.



John Tucker and family at their last dinner at Rosewater. | Photo from John Tucker's collection