

Ivrea's Polenta Cake (Polenta di Ivrea)

Amy Riolo (October 10, 2017)



There is a town in the province of Torin (in Piedmont) named Ivrea, which is the home of a famous polenta cake created in 1922 called “La polenta di Ivrea.” This cake is traditionally covered with a drizzle of honey and orange juice. I created this recipe as a diabetes-friendly alternative to the original. Fortunately, everyone who tries it loves it and is surprised to learn that it is diabetes friendly—and naturally gluten-free. You can turn to this easy, straightforward cake for a delicious addition to brunch, teatime, or dessert.

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Serves: 12

Serving size: 1 (3/4-inch) slice



Prep time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

2/3 cup expeller-pressed canola or vegetable oil, plus extra for greasing pan

1 cup natural sugar

1/2 cup almond flour

1 cup fine polenta (or cornmeal)

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder (use gluten-free, if needed)

3 large eggs

Zest of 2 lemons

1 teaspoon vanilla

Juice of 1 orange, for drizzling (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line the base of a 9-inch springform cake pan with baking parchment and grease bottom and sides lightly with canola oil.
2. Combine 2/3 cup canola oil and sugar, either by hand in a bowl with a wooden spoon or using a freestanding mixer, until pale and fully combined.
3. Mix together the almond flour, polenta, and baking powder, and beat part of this dry mixture into the oil/sugar mixture, followed by 1 egg. Then alternate adding the dry ingredients and eggs, beating all the while, until all of the dry mixture and eggs are incorporated. Finally, beat in the lemon zest and vanilla, and pour, spoon, or scrape the mixture into your prepared cake pan.
4. Bake for about 30 minutes, or until lightly golden and a cake tester or toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. The edges of the cake should have begun to shrink away from sides of the pan.
5. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely. Release the sides of the pan and invert cake onto a cake platter. Drizzle with orange juice, if desired. Serve immediately, or store at room temperature overnight or in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Italian Living Tradition

This cake is the northern Italian answer to popular Mediterranean semolina cakes, which are doused with simple syrup and served as very sweet desserts. Made with just a few pantry ingredients, this is the type of cake that Italian housewives would whip up upon the arrival of unexpected guests or to serve with the Sunday meal.

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