

Bacon Cornbread

(From *The Bread Baker's Apprentice* by Peter Reinhart)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup (6 ounces) coarse cornmeal (aka 'polenta')
- 2 cups (16 ounces) buttermilk
- 8 ounces bacon (~10 slices)
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups (8 ounces) unbleached AP flour
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons (.75 ounce) baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon (.05 ounce) baking soda
- 1 teaspoon (.25 ounce) salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2 ounces) granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2 ounces) firmly packed brown sugar
- 3 large (5 ounces) eggs
- 2 tablespoons (1.5 ounces) honey
- 2 tablespoons (1 ounce) unsalted butter, melted
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (16 ounces) fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 2 tablespoons (1 ounce) bacon fat or vegetable oil

Method:

1) The night before baking the cornbread, soak the cornmeal in the buttermilk. Cover and leave at room temperature overnight.

2) The next day, to prepare the bacon, preheat the oven to 375°F. Lay out the bacon on 2 sheet pans. Bake for about 15 to 20 minutes, or until the bacon is crisp. Using tongs or a fork, remove the pieces to a pan lined with paper towels to cool. Drain off the fat into a can or stainless-steel bowl and save for greasing the corn bread pan. When the bacon has cooled, crumble it into coarse pieces.

3) Lower the oven setting to 350 deg. F. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt into a mixing bowl. Stir in the granulated sugar and brown sugar. In another bowl, lightly beat the eggs. Dissolve the honey in the melted butter and then stir the warm honey-butter mixture into the eggs. Add this to the soaked cornmeal mixture. Add the wet mixture to the flour mixture and stir with a large spoon or whisk until all the ingredients are evenly distributed and the batter is blended and smooth. It should be the consistency of thick pancake batter. Stir in the corn kernels until they are evenly distributed.

4) Place 2 tablespoons of the rendered bacon fat into a 10-inch round cake pan (you can also use a 9 by 13-inch baking pan or a 12-inch square pan). Place the pan in the oven for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the fat gets very hot. With good pot holders or oven mitts, remove the pan, tilt it to grease all the corners and sides, and pour in the batter, spreading it from the center of the pan to the edges. Sprinkle the crumbled bacon pieces evenly over the top, gently pressing them into the batter.

5.) Bake for about 30 minutes, or until the corn bread is firm and springy (the baking time will depend on the size of the pan) and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. The top will be a medium golden brown. The internal temperature at the center of the corn bread should register at least 185 deg. F.

6) Allow the bread to cool in the pan for at least 15 minutes before slicing it into squares or wedges. Serve warm.