

CORNBREAD DRESSING


- 6 cups of cornbread chunks (which, as all Jesus-hearted people know, equals 2 skillet of *Grandpa Gary's Cornbread*)
 - 2 cups of biscuit chunks (3 Pillsbury "Grands" biscuits or 3 slices of toasted white bread, torn into chunks)
 - 1/2 tsp salt
 - 1 tsp pepper
 - 1 1/2 cups celery, chopped
 - 1 1/2 cups onions, chopped
 - 1 stick butter
 - 1/3 cup water
 - 2 cups chicken broth
 - 1/2 cup vegetable oil
 - 3 eggs, lightly beaten
1. Combine the first 4 ingredients in a large bowl and set aside. (I like to do this the night before to let the bread dry out a little. See Note below.)
 2. Preheat oven to 375.
 3. Combine the next 4 ingredients in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Remove from heat and add to the cornbread mixture.
 4. Add the next 3 ingredients, mixing everything evenly but not enough to reduce the mixture to mush.
 5. Spoon the dressing into a greased 9x13 (3-quart) baking dish. (Important: use butter to grease the baking dish. It really does make a difference in this recipe.)
 6. Using a large spoon, gently pat down the top of the dressing to a fairly smooth surface so there are no protruding pieces of cornbread to burn in the oven.
 7. Bake dressing at 375, uncovered, for 40-50 minutes, or until set and golden brown.

Notes

1. *Cornbread dressing can't be any better than the cornbread you start with.* Before experimenting with other cornbreads, try this dressing recipe with *Grandpa Gary's Cornbread*. I'm telling you what: *it works*.
2. Getting the cornbread ready to make dressing has been a part of my Wednesday-night-after-Bible-Study-before-Thanksgiving-Day ritual for many years. After baking, I break up the cornbread and biscuits into chunks and toss everything loosely, along with the salt and pepper, into the "top" of an upside-down Tupperware cake-saver and set the "lid" on loosely, so that a little air can get inside. This sits overnight on the kitchen counter and is just about perfect by the next morning.
3. You'll notice that I call them bread "chunks" rather than "crumbs" — that's because I prefer to leave the bread in bigger pieces. If you break it into small crumbs, before you finish mixing it with the liquid you will have reduced the whole thing to mush. So just break the cornbread and biscuits into reasonable size pieces, and toss them lightly to mix in the salt and pepper.

Comments

1. *This dressing has no sage.* The very idea is Thanksgiving heresy, I know, but my experience is that people love this dressing precisely because it is not sharpened by the herbal tang of sage. I maintain that folks who think they don't care for dressing have usually just never had it without sage. Before you say, "Gary is crazy; I'm going to add sage anyway," try it without and see if your Thanksgiving guests don't like it. Here is the gospel truth: dressing should be *savory* rather than *herbal*. That's my story and I'm sticking to it!
 2. Also, most folks who think they don't like "dressing" have never had any good *cornbread* dressing; they've only experi-
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enced the slimy mush that results from using store-bought white bread. If you make the above recipe correctly, it won't be slimy. The key is drying out the bread mixture before you make the dressing, and baking the dressing long enough to make it firm. Before serving, I allow the dressing to "set up" for a few minutes after it comes out of the oven. What you want is dressing that is firm enough not to be gooey, but not cooked so long that it's dry. Depending on your oven, you may have to experiment with the cooking time to get it just right.

Gary Henry — SouthernCookbook.com

Adapted from Fannie Flagg's "Cornbread Dressing" in *Fannie Flagg's Original Whistle Stop Cafe Cookbook* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), p.30.
