

## GRANDPA GARY'S CORNBREAD


- 1 cup cornmeal (preferably white)
  - 1/2 tsp baking soda
  - 1/2 tsp baking powder
  - 1/2 tsp salt
  - 1 cup buttermilk
  - 1 egg
  - 2/3 cup finely shredded medium cheddar cheese (if making cheese cornbread)
  - 2 TBS butter
1. Preheat oven to 450.
  2. Put the butter in a well-seasoned 10-inch iron skillet. Put the skillet in preheated oven for 5-7 minutes. You want the skillet to be hot and the butter to be melted (sizzling, but not burning).
  3. While the skillet is heating up in the oven, whisk the cornmeal, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in a bowl.
  4. Just before removing the hot skillet from the oven, add the egg and buttermilk to the dry mixture and stir just until the batter has an even consistency.
  5. If making cheese cornbread, add the shredded cheese to the batter immediately after mixing in the egg and buttermilk, and stir again just until mixed evenly.
  6. Remove the skillet from the oven. Gently swirl the butter around in the skillet to coat the sides of the skillet, then pour the remaining butter into the cornbread batter and stir just until mixed.
  7. Pour batter into the skillet and shake the skillet slightly to distribute the batter evenly.
  8. Return the skillet to the oven and bake for 17-18 minutes, or until golden brown.
  9. If you want a browner, crispier top crust, turn on the broiler for the last 1-2 minutes of the cooking time — *but watch closely to avoid burning the cornbread.*
  10. Remove from the oven and slice the cornbread into wedges while still in the skillet. Serve hot, with butter.

### Notes

1. The thickness of the cornbread can be varied by using skillets of different sizes. A given amount of batter will obviously spread out more in a larger skillet than a smaller one, resulting in a thinner, crustier bread. Adjust the baking time according to the depth of the batter in a particular skillet, slightly longer times being needed to bake thicker cornbread. In my oven and with my skillets, 16 minutes for the 12-inch skillet, 18 minutes for the 10-inch skillet, and 20 minutes for the 8-inch skillet are about right. Square baking pans, cornstick griddles, etc. can also be used.
2. Ronni Lundy recommends using kosher salt — it does make excellent cornbread.

### Comments

1. There are fancier cornbreads than this, but this one is the real deal. This is the kind of staple, everyday cornbread that working-class Southerners used to eat all the time.
  2. This is the recipe for the cornbread that goes into my *Cornbread Dressing* on Thanksgiving. No dressing can be any better than the cornbread that goes into it, so this recipe will get you started in the direction of something good!
  3. A cast iron skillet makes the best cornbread, but many people still prefer to use an old 9-inch square baking pan. The advantage of square cornbread is that it has four corner pieces. The crust of cornbread being the most delicious part, a corner piece with crust on two sides is a prize!
  4. The real test of any cornbread is how good it tastes the next day or two. Good cornbread just gets better when it's a day or two old. In fact, if you like cornbread crumbled up in buttermilk (the proverbial "Southern Smoothie"), crusty day-
-



old cornbread is better than fresh.

5. Cornbread fans fall into two categories: those who like some sugar in their cornbread and those who don't. There's no accounting for personal taste, of course, and this argument will never be settled — it's just one of those things Southerners enjoy debating. Even so, the faithful know the truth: *real Southern cornbread simply can't have sugar in it*. As Ronni Lundy said, "If God had meant for cornbread to have sugar in it, he'd have called it cake."
6. In all seriousness, Ronni, whose family came from the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, wrote, "No sugar [in cornbread] became a matter of taste, but it was also initially a matter of practicality. Cornbread was daily bread. Cornbread could be made from the meal ground from corn that mountain families had grown. Sugar had to be bought at the store. So while it might appear in cakes and pies, in candy made of a cold evening or cookies baked for Christmas, boughten sugar was not a thing to be put in a dish made every day, sometimes twice. Cornbread without sugar, then, is for my people, the taste of independence, of freedom."

Gary Henry — [SouthernCookbook.com](http://SouthernCookbook.com)

---