What’s inside?

A sun?

—May Swenson

**Fresh Corn Polenta with Baked Eggs**

 Vivid yellow-orange-yolked eggs nestled in a yellow bed of fresh corn and corn-grits polenta bake proudly, displaying their splendid silent suns and resplendent whites. When you dig into this dish, the rich yolks spill out into the golden corn extravaganza, making a sauce for the corn that helps fill you up without weighing you down. The warm solace of autumn corn makes sumptuous brunch, breakfast, or light supper fare. You can bake the polenta in two pie plates, or individual servings in gratin dishes. You can halve the recipe as needed, and you can even cook the polenta part in advance. Just make sure to heat it before adding the eggs, to ensure even cooking.

Serves 4

1 medium poblano pepper

3 cups fresh corn kernels (from 3 to 4 ears)

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

3/4 cup corn grits (coarse polenta)

2 1/4 cups water, plus more for the eggs

3/4 teaspoon salt

Freshly ground black pepper

3 ounces grated cheddar cheese (3/4 cup; optional)

8 large eggs

1. Using your favorite method, roast the poblano pepper. (See page 37.) Peel it and cut into thin lengthwise strips, then cut the strips in half crosswise. Set aside.

2. Preheat the oven to 325ºF. Lightly oil two 9-inch pie plates or four individual gratin dishes.

3. Pulse the corn kernels in a food processor until you have a coarse purée. Melt the butter in a medium pot over medium heat. Add the corn purée and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly, until thickened.

4. Stir in the corn grits, water, and salt and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer uncovered, stirring from time to time, until thickened and cooked, 5 to 10 minutes.

5. Sprinkle the polenta with black pepper. Stir in the poblano strips and the cheese, if using.

6. Divide the polenta between the pie plates or gratin dishes. With the back of a spoon, make little indentations in the polenta, like evenly spaced craters that can each receive its own egg, its own hot yellow sun. Crack the eggs into the indented spots and sprinkle with salt. Drizzle a few drops of water over the eggs to keep them from drying out.

7. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until the whites are set and the yolks are shiny–not runny but still soft. Transfer to plates (no need if you’re using gratin dishes) and serve hot.

**Poet’s Note**

This polenta—while it has a small amount of grits to bind it together—is made mostly from puréed fresh corn, giving it a fresher, juicier corn flavor and texture than the typical polenta. Hearty American settlers learned from Native Americans how to make a corn pudding. They loved it, as did founding father Benjamin Franklin, who ate it for breakfast. We now use the word “polenta” for corn mush made from ground corn because, a couple of generations after Columbus first brought it back to Europe, the Italians found that corn made a stunningly flavorful and creamy polenta grain. Traditional Italian polenta is made with more finely ground corn than grits; but since gritty flint corn is used, it’s not excessively homogeneous. To this day, delicious heirloom corn varieties, such as Floriani, which was the staple polenta corn of the Valsugana Valley, are known by Italian names.

The Brooklyn poet Samuel Menashe is said to be the first person who wrote of a day so hot that you could fry an egg “on the sidewalk,” a feat that was recently attempted (with mixed results) on the streets of New York City, according to the *New York Times.* In the cooler depths of autumn, there’s nothing like hot baked eggs in a bed of polenta to revive warm memories of summer languor.

**At Breakfast**

Not quite

spherical

White

oddly closed

and without a lid

A smooth miracle

here in my hand

Has it slid

from my sleeve?

The shape

of this box

keeps me oval

Heels feel

its bottom

Nape knocks

its top

Seated

like feotus

I look for

the dream-seam

What’s inside?

A sun?

Off with its head

though it hasn’t any

or is all head and not body

a

One

Neatly

the knife scalps it

I scoop out

the braincap

soft

sweetly shuddering

Mooncream

this could be

Spoon

laps the larger

crescent

loosens a gilded

nucleus

from warm pap

A lyrical food

Opened

a seamless miracle

Ate a sun-germ

Good

—May Swenson