

Pepperoni Cornbread

Like a reliable wingman, cornbread is always a welcome addition to a cookout. It tastes great hot or cold, goes well with the usual suspects on the picnic table (think baked beans or grilled chicken) and transports easily. It seems like it would be impossible to improve, right? Then we went and added pepperoni. You're welcome.

Ingredients

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
2 cups milk
2 large eggs
3 pickled cherry peppers, drained, stemmed and chopped (about 1/3 cup)
1½ cups stone-ground yellow cornmeal
1/2 cup all-purpose flour (spooned and leveled)
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon sugar
5 ounce piece pepperoni, cut into 1/8-inch cubes (1¼ cup)

special equipment

heavy 10-inch ovenproof skillet, preferably cast iron

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Whisk the butter, milk and eggs in a medium bowl, then stir in the cherry peppers. Whisk the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and sugar in a large bowl.

Heat a 10-inch ovenproof skillet, preferably cast iron, over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add the pepperoni and cook, stirring, until most of the fat is rendered and the cubes begin to crisp, about 4 minutes. Remove the pepperoni with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel-lined plate. Swirl the remaining fat around the pan, including the sides, to coat the pan, and then discard excess oil.

Whisk the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Stir in the pepperoni. Pour the batter into the skillet. Bake until a toothpick comes out clean, the center domes, and the cornbread pulls away from the sides and browns on top, about 25 minutes. Let cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then turn onto a wire rack to cool further, or simply serve it in the pan. (If your bread needs some coaxing out of the pan, run a sharp knife around the edges before turning out to wire rack.) Cut into wedges to serve.

total time: 1 hour 10 minutes

active prep: 30 minutes

serves: 8

difficulty: *easy*