



THE Traveling Fork

This month, a timely discussion of cornbread. Yes, cornbread! My focus is on what has become the evolutionary practice of chronically sweetening cornbread. This practice has resulted in sweet cornbread even at such traditional country cuisine purveyors as Cracker Barrel Restaurants.

Those who love real country-style cornbread are aghast at receiving the sweetened, dessert style cornbread. When I want dessert, I will opt for a rich cake or pie product of the oven--not cornbread. It has gotten so bad that when I order from the menu, I always ask if the cornbread is sweetened. More often than not, the answer is "yes", even at Crackerbarrel, a supposed-to-be source of country-style cuisine. This borders on sacrilege. So, this leads to my offering of a cornbread recipe which contains high-value protein along with other ingredients making it fit for those who know and love REAL cornbread. This recipe is not the only good version of cornbread as there are many good cooks who value the traditional style of cornbread, but this is the only one I even contemplate any more. It is born of my experiences in Texas and I have tinkered with it over the years.



I don't want to sound like a braggart but I have entered this cornbread in the baking contests of four county fairs in two states and it always wins a blue ribbon. I call it BILL'S TEXAS CORNBREAD; my wife, Marcia, calls it JALAPENO CORNBREAD. Feel free to attach any name to it that suits you. The number of jalapenos you use can alter the "heat", but the modern jalapenos have lost much of their genetic "heat" by cross pollination with sweet peppers. Canned Mexican jalapenos are much "hotter".

Bill's Blue Ribbon TEXAS CORN BREAD

Start with two bowls, one for wet materials and one for dry materials.

WET MATERIALS

- 1/2 to 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1 1/3 cup sharp grated cheddar cheese
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 1/2 cup chopped jalapeno peppers
- 1 cup creamed style corn
- 4 eggs beaten
- 1 cup chopped onions

DRY MATERIALS

- 3 cups corn meal
- 1 1/4 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Carefully and thoroughly mix each bowl separately. Measure the olive oil first in a large measuring cup. Then, beating the eggs in that cup makes the eggs easier to pour out. Next, measuring the buttermilk in the same measuring cup makes it easier to pour out because of the oil residue. When each mixture is thoroughly mixed, pour the dry mixture into the wet mixture and blend both quickly with a spatula. Into a 9" X 13" (or similar) pan or casserole dish spray an aerosol cooking oil on the surfaces of the bowl. Move the batter into this bowl. Garnishing the top with a mixture of red and green pepper strips makes the finished product a beautiful presentation. Place the bowl containing batter into a pre-heated 375 degree F. oven and bake for one hour.

Take out, let cool, serve, and enjoy.



- BILL BLACKWELL

