

## the reactor

By Paul Azevedo



Is Polenta an endangered species? That glorious coarse ground corn meal which was the filling mainstay of so many Bay Area Italian families for years (and you thought all they ate was spaghetti), has almost disappeared.

The no-nonsense red and green package labeled "Farina di Granoturco per Polenta Prima Qualita Gialla (Flour of Indian Meal, Polenta, First Quality Yellow)" which was packaged and distributed by the Albers division of the Carnation Company for so long, seems to have disappeared from the marketplace.

WHEN MY LAST package was used up I went to store after store, first in Pacifica, then in San

Francisco looking for this product, and when I could not find it, I felt like the Italian side of my heritage had been insulted.

Happily Leo Musso's QFI stores have not let the great polenta shortage go unremedied. Anonymous bags of polenta, which carry the weight and the price but not the name, are available at QFI. I finally discovered some after a diligent search.

IF YOU DIDN'T have Italian grandparents as I did, polenta may be new to you. It's a simple dish, prepared with boiling water, polenta meal, and flavored with meat sauce or cheese (melt some teleme cheese in your hot polenta and you have a gourmet treat).

Polenta is coarse. Don't be persuaded to substitute other types of corn meal. They aren't polenta. They don't have the character, the body, which makes polenta.

Don't, for the honor of Italian-style home cooking anywhere, buy the refrigerated blocks of polenta some misguided stores sell. Fresh polenta is so easy to prepare that previously prepared polenta is almost like buying canned tea. You know, "heat and serve."

MY SEARCH FOR polenta came about when we decided to have another taste of "Aunt Amelia's Tamale Pie." I have tasted other tamale pies, but my Aunt Amelia's is the best. My mother gave the recipe to me, and my wife makes it every so often as a special treat (and does a very nice job of it). Here's the recipe, if you can find the polenta.

Finely chop 1 medium onion, and 3 cloves garlic. Saute in ½ cup butter or margarine. When the garlic and onion is tender and yellow-brown, combine with the following:

- 1 cup polenta
- 1 cup milk
- 3 beaten eggs
- 1 "2½" can tomatoes

1 "300" can pitted olives

1 "303" can cream-style corn

1½ cups cooked, chopped meat

2 tablespoons chili powder

The mixed ingredients will FILL a 2½-quart casserole.

Place the casserole in a pan with one or two inches of water. Bake for three hours at 300 degrees. Bake uncovered for the first hour, cover for the last two hours so it will stay moist.

You can divide the recipe into two casseroles; cook and freeze one (or both) for future use.

You do not add salt. My wife Lydia has used cooked, chopped, chicken, turkey, hamburger, veal and venison, as well as roast beef.

Enjoy!

### Mabel Barsi

Mrs. Mabel Barsi, 60, mother of Mrs. Deanna Panages of Pacifica and grandmother of Stephen and George Panages, died Dec. 10. A mass of Christian burial, Dec. 13, was followed by entombment in Holy Cross cemetery.



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**PER**

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**PRIMA QUALITA**  
**GIALLA**

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