

Dessert of the Month



PEACH AND CORNMEAL UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE The care-free days of summer are embodied in this relatively effortless, yet elegant, skillet dessert. Aromatic lavender permeates the lightly sweetened cornmeal cake, and plump peaches impart even more fragrance and flavor. For the recipe, turn the page.

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DESSERT OF THE MONTH



arranging peaches in skillet



spreading batter over peaches



inverting cake

**PEACH AND CORNMEAL
UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE**

SERVES 8

Fresh lavender is available at farmers' markets from mid- to late summer. The cake can be made in a 12-inch, rather than a 10-inch, skillet; this will require an additional peach and a baking time of 18 to 20 minutes.

- 5½ ounces (1 stick plus 3 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 medium ripe peaches (about 1¼ pounds), skins on, pitted, and cut into ¾-inch wedges
- 1 cup coarse yellow cornmeal or polenta
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh lavender, or 1½ teaspoons dried lavender (see the Guide)
- 1¼ teaspoons coarse salt
- 3 large eggs
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ½ cup heavy cream

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat, using a pastry brush to coat sides with butter as it melts. Sprinkle ¼ cup sugar evenly over bottom of skillet, and cook until sugar starts to bubble and turn golden brown, about 3 minutes. Arrange

peaches in a circle at edge of skillet, on top of sugar. Arrange the remaining wedges in the center to fill. Reduce heat to low, and cook until juices are bubbling and peaches begin to soften, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from heat.

2. Whisk cornmeal, flour, baking powder, lavender, and salt in a medium bowl. Beat remaining stick of butter and ¾ cup sugar with a mixer on high speed, until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Reduce speed to medium. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition and scraping down sides of bowl. Mix in vanilla and cream. Reduce speed to low, and beat in cornmeal mixture in 2 additions.

3. Drop large spoonfuls of batter over peaches, and spread evenly using an offset spatula. Bake until golden brown and a tester inserted in the center comes out clean, 20 to 22 minutes. Transfer skillet to a wire rack, and let stand for 10 minutes. Run a knife or spatula around edge of cake. Quickly invert cake onto a cutting board. Tap bottom of skillet to release peaches, and carefully remove skillet. Reposition peach slices on top of cake. Let cool slightly before serving.



peach picking
Perfectly ripe peaches, available from May to October, will feel heavy for their size, yield slightly to gentle pressure, and emit a sweet, heady perfume. Avoid any fruit tinged with green, as it won't ripen. Ready-to-eat peaches last three to five days refrigerated; firmer ones will soften when kept in a brown paper bag on the counter for up to three days.

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