

Paptert (PAP BAKE)

This over-the-top, baked pap dish was born out of a necessity to use leftover, stiffened, cooled pap in an inventive way. It almost resembles a lasagne or potato bake, layered and baked mostly in a rectangular dish (with other ingredients, such as pan-fried mushrooms, onions, sweetcorn, canned tomatoes, bacon and cream), topped with melted, grilled cheese. Although paptert can be assembled with stiffened leftover pap sliced into 1-cm thick slices, some like to use freshly made pap and allow it to set inside the dish in two layers separated by a layer of clingfilm to make two perfect layers of the same size. One thing is certain: it is undeniably delicious and it’s outstanding as a braai side dish. The ingredients below are for making the pap from scratch.

Note

Some prefer a tomato-based paptert and others a cheesy version with no tomato. Use whatever you prefer.

SERVES 6

FOR THE PAP

1 litre (4 cups) water

375 g (2½ cups) white maize meal or braai pap

5 ml (1 tsp) salt

FOR THE FILLING AND TOPPING

30 ml (2 Tbsp) olive or vegetable oil

1 onion, peeled and chopped

200 g streaky bacon, chopped

250 g mushrooms, chopped or sliced

2 x 410 g cans chopped tomatoes

salt and pepper, to taste

2 cups grated cheddar cheese

125 ml (½ cup) fresh cream

PREPARE THE PAP

Add 2 cups water and all the maize meal to a mixing bowl and stir. Heat the remaining 2 cups water with the salt in a medium pot and bring to a simmer. Add the maize-and-water mixture, stirring well, and bring back to a simmer. Cook for 10 minutes over low heat, stirring, then remove from the heat, cover with a lid and leave to rest for 10 minutes. Transfer half the mixture to a deep rectangular baking dish (about 30 x 20 cm), smoothing the top. Cover with a layer of clingfilm, then pour the remaining pap on top and smooth it out (you’ll remove this layer later for assembly). Cover with more clingfilm, then leave to set and cool completely (at least 2 hours or overnight).

PREPARE THE FILLING

In a large pot over medium heat, heat the oil and add the onion, bacon and mushrooms. Fry until golden-brown, then set aside.

ASSEMBLE THE PAPTERT

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Remove the top layer of pap and set aside. Pour one can of chopped tomatoes over the bottom layer of pap, spread it out and season with salt and pepper. Top evenly with half the fried bacon mixture, as well as half the cheese. Place the second layer of pap over the filling, pressing down lightly. Repeat by topping with the second can of tomatoes, seasoning, bacon mixture and cheese, then pour the cream all over the paptert. Bake for 30–40 minutes until golden-brown and bubbling. Remove from the oven and let it stand for at least 5–10 minutes before serving.



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