

**Nick's Organic Farm**  
Potomac and Buckeystown, MD  
[www.nicksorganicfarm.com](http://www.nicksorganicfarm.com)

**ORGANIC RED FLORIANI**  
*"Spin Rossa della Valsugana"*

Whole-Grain Heritage Flint Corn—GMO-Free  
~ Ideal for Polenta and Cornbread ~  
Keep refrigerated

The Story of Floriani Red Corn

Originally from the Americas hundreds of years ago, "*Spin Rossa della Valsugana*" or "Spiny Red from the Valley of Sugana" probably arrived in Italy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century via Spain, as European explorers brought plants and animals home. Over the centuries, this Native American red flint corn adapted to the climate of northern Italy in the foothills of the Alps. The plants are open pollinated, in nature, uncontrolled by hybrid techniques, thus allowing for a wide range of genetic diversity to arise. Farmers selected which seeds to keep based on their good flavor and palatability, red color, and pointed kernels, while the plants developed an ability to germinate and mature in the cool Alpine climate.

This special red corn was reintroduced to the Americas around 2008, when William Rubel, a food historian and writer, visited Italy and brought some back. Coordinating with farmers across the United States, Rubel was able to test it in various locations, effectively returning it to this side of the Atlantic. The farmers decided on the name "Floriani Red," after the Italian family who gave Rubel the seeds. Similar efforts to revitalize red flint corns on a larger scale are also taking place today in northern Italy.

This Floriani Red corn is particularly important because it is a "landrace," that is, a traditionally farmed, locally adapted variety with high genetic diversity. As such, it continues to evolve, producing a few yellow and orange cobs on occasion. Genetic diversity can help a species survive new diseases or changing environmental conditions, such as global warming. Our Floriani Red is free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and it is also certified organic.

Flint Corn Versus Dent Corn

Floriani is a flint corn, which has a relatively hard starch outer layer and small amount of soft starch on the inside. Flint corns were grown extensively through the colonial period and predominated in the northeastern United States. As did the Native Americans, the colonial settlers consumed the whole grain, including the germ (sprout) and the bran (seed coat) along with the cornstarch.

Flint corn differs from dent corn, which is the typical corn grown in America today. Dent corns have a thin exterior of hard starch and more soft starch on the interior which, when dry, shrinks to create the characteristic "dent" on the top of the kernel.

### Whole-Grain Corn Versus Corn Meal and Grits

We do not remove or separate any portions of our corn before we grind it (and often we just sell the whole kernels—because our customers wish to grind it themselves). Thus, when ground, our Floriani Red is a whole-grain corn, which produces a deep corn flavor.

In contrast, to produce today's typical meal or grits, the germ and the bran are removed to improve shelf life without refrigeration. This process reduces the nutritional value—and flavor. Drawing the analogy to wheat, cornmeal and hominy grits are like “white” flour, while Floriani is like “whole wheat” flour.

### How To Grind and Store Floriani Red

You can grind the corn with a small grain mill operated by hand or powered by an electric motor, or with a grain mill attachment to your food processor. You can also grind the corn very quickly and effectively in a food blender, but the blender must have a strong motor or only do a small amount (1 cup) at a time. (And smell the deep corn aroma when you take the lid off!)

You can grind for the texture that you desire. Think of sand—fine, medium, or coarse. Feel the texture to help decide. You will not get a totally uniform size unless you separate the grind with a series of sieves. With most mills you can grind twice for more fineness or you can put the corn through a flour sifter to remove larger particles. (You can save the larger particles to use as a garnish or regrind them.)

If you use a blender, you will get a finer grind on the bottom and coarser one on the top. Running the blender longer will create more fine grains—so be careful not to create a powder (flour) unless that is what you want. Pulsing the blender and stirring with a spoon between pulses to lift the fines and allow the coarse particles to fall nearer the blades will give a more consistent grind.

Because your ground Floriani is the whole grain, it will have a light yellow to cream and brown color with pink overtones from the flecks of the red seed coats. It should feel “gritty,” but it should have a small amount of dust (flour) that sticks to your fingers.

Some people prefer a medium grind for polenta and a coarser grind for cornbread. We prefer a coarser grind for both because the variation in particle size gives more interest. Have fun and experiment!

Because your Floriani still contains the germ, you should store your whole corn and your ground corn in the refrigerator for best quality.

### Polenta and Cornbread

Floriani will require more cooking time than hominy grits because it contains the germ and the bran and because it contains a much higher percentage of “hard” starch, which takes longer to soften. While some cooks simmer Floriani for up to three hours, we stop at about one hour. A longer cooking time creates a creamier and softer polenta, which might be important if you plan on serving it immediately. We usually cool it in the refrigerator and then cut it into slices or cubes for reheating or sautéing. Some say you can cut the cooking time to 20 minutes in a pressure cooker.

Nick's Basic Floriani Polenta  
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1 cup organic Floriani Red polenta (coarsely ground Floriani Red corn)  
4 cups water  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons butter or extra virgin olive oil (optional)  
½ cup grated Parmesan or other hard cheese (optional)

Bring the water and salt to a boil and slowly sprinkle in the polenta while whisking or stirring to avoid clumping. The mixture will thicken slowly. Turn the heat to simmer and stir at least every 5 minutes to prevent sticking on the bottom of the pot. If you're only cooking it for one hour, you do not need to cover the pot. If it is getting too thick or sticking heavily, add more water, a ¼ cup at a time, and stir.

If you are serving immediately, add butter or olive oil and grated cheese, stirring to fully incorporate. At this point you can also add sautéed mushrooms and/or onions, or other spices. Some add nothing at all.

If you are saving it for later, oil or rub butter into a mold, bread pan or shallow glass pie dish. Put the corn into the pan, using a spatula to make it level. Place the dish in the refrigerator until the corn is cool and hardened. When it is fully hardened (shake to test it!), place a flat dish on top of the pan, and turn it over to remove it.

You can then slice ½" strips or 1" cubes to be eaten warmed for breakfast with sausage, or warm or cold with maple syrup or honey. Or you can sauté it to the desired crispiness with butter and olive oil and your choice of fresh spices (thyme, rosemary, sage, etc.) and maybe topped with grated cheese. You can also sauté it simply with salt and pepper, or top with various tomato sauces with or without baked or grilled vegetables. The polenta can also be grilled or baked rather than sautéed.

Sophia's Basic Floriani Cornbread  
(sweet, with savory instructions included)  
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The Floriani flint corn holds its crunch well even after it is baked in this hearty cornbread. For a savory, dryer cornbread, do not add maple syrup, and reduce the milk or yogurt by ¼ cup. You can also add some combination of grated cheese, flavorful dried or fresh slightly hot peppers, and/or dried tomatoes. If adding fresh moist ingredients such as peppers or blueberries, store the cornbread in the refrigerator to prevent spoilage.

1 cup Floriani cornmeal (coarse to fine—both work great depending on your desired result)  
1 cup whole wheat all purpose flour  
2 teaspoon baking powder  
½ teaspoon baking soda  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ cup milk  
½ cup yogurt or buttermilk  
1 egg  
6-9 tablespoons pure maple syrup  
3 tablespoons melted butter  
1 cup blueberries or peppers (optional)

Grease an 8"-square pan and pre-heat oven to 350 degrees. (Cast iron is best for even cooking.) Combine the dry ingredients in medium-sized bowl. Combine the wet ingredients in another bowl. Stir the wet ingredients into the dry, mixing just enough to combine them. Spread the mixture into the pan. If desired, sprinkle sugar on top. Place a wide pan or bowl of shallow water in the oven—it will help with the crusting. Bake cornbread for about 20 minutes, or until a knife comes out clean, and the top is golden brown. Serve warm, or at room temperature. Butter and honey are optional!