

# Ham and Two-Cheese Spoon Bread

Neither a bread pudding nor a soufflé, spoon bread is beloved throughout the South as both a main course and side dish for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Virginia, Maryland, both Carolinas, Kentucky, and Tennessee, all claim to be the home state of the specialty. Virginian Thomas Jefferson, one of this country's earliest epicureans, was said to favor spoon bread for breakfast, and in the 1847 cookbook *The Carolina Housewife*, author Sarah Rutledge writes, "Spoon bread was as popular as a Southern belle everywhere in the South." We think it deserves appreciation beyond Dixie. Whether it's made with only the most basic ingredients—cornmeal, eggs, and milk—or given new life with the addition of ham and Parmesan cheese, this satisfying dish is always tender enough to eat with a spoon and enticing enough to spark friendly rivalries between states. Our Ham and Two-Cheese Spoon Bread strikes the same appealing balance of light texture and rich flavor by folding egg whites into two robustly flavored cheeses. So no matter what meal you serve it for, it's bound to become a classic on your table. **By David Bonom**

- 2¾ cups fat-free milk
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ⅛ teaspoon ground red pepper
- ¾ cup yellow cornmeal
- 2 large egg yolks, lightly beaten

**Cooking spray**

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 8 ounces 33%-less-sodium ham, diced
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded reduced-fat sharp cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup (1 ounce) grated fresh Parmesan cheese
- 4 large egg whites

1. Preheat oven to 375°.
2. Combine milk, sugar, dried thyme, and pepper in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. When mixture begins to simmer, gradually add

cornmeal in a slow, steady stream, stirring well with a whisk. Cook 3 minutes or until thickened and smooth, stirring constantly. Transfer cornmeal mixture to a large bowl. Add yolks, stirring with a whisk. Let mixture stand 10 minutes.

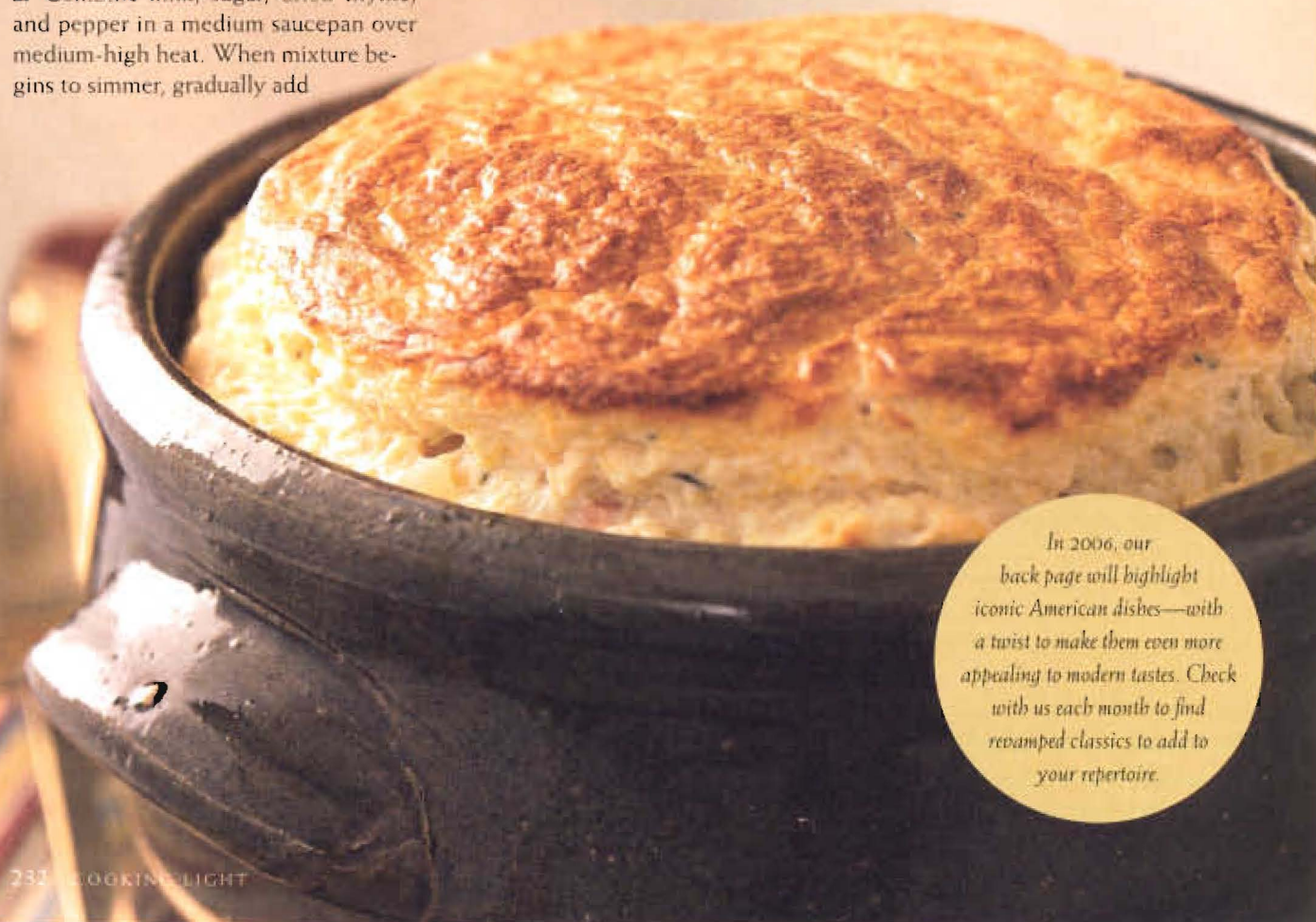
3. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add onion; sauté 6 minutes or until tender. Add to cornmeal mixture. Recoat pan with cooking spray. Add ham; sauté 5 minutes or until ham begins to brown. Add to cornmeal mixture. Stir cheeses into cornmeal mixture.

4. Beat egg whites with a mixer at high speed until stiff peaks form (do not over-

beat). Gently stir one-third of egg white mixture into cornmeal mixture; gently fold in remaining egg white mixture. Using a rubber spatula, scrape cornmeal mixture into a 1½-quart soufflé or deep baking dish coated with cooking spray. Bake at 375° for 50 minutes or until puffed, golden brown, and just set in center. Serve immediately. Yield: 8 servings (serving size: about 1 cup).

CALORIES 201 (29% from fat); FAT 6.4g (sat 3.3g, mono 1.3g, poly 0.4g); PROTEIN 16.6g; CARB 18.3g; FIBER 1.3g; CHOL 78mg; IRON 1.1mg; SODIUM 586mg; CALC 219mg

David Bonom is a Cooking Light contributor and restaurant critic for the New Jersey Record.



In 2006, our back page will highlight iconic American dishes—with a twist to make them even more appealing to modern tastes. Check with us each month to find revamped classics to add to your repertoire.