

Sweet Corn

Singing praises for this sweet summer crop!

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Summer in Minnesota is the season for eating corn on the cob, and has been for much of history. The Iroquois gave the first sweet corn to European settlers in 1779 and it very quickly grew to be a popular food in the southern and central regions of the United States. Today, the very thought of sweet corn conjures images of sweet, wholesome goodness. It is delicious in its pure, unchanged form and can add flavor, color and texture to your favorite meat, poultry, seafood or vegetable dishes.

For those of us who have been waiting all summer to get our hands on sweet corn, there is good news! Sweet corn season has arrived! The Minnesota Grown Directory boasts [80 producers](#) of this tasty crop, and it can be found at nearly all of Minnesota Grown's [183 farmers markets](#).

Did you know that corn has cultivated by humans for about 4,000 years? Sweet corn actually developed by chance, but we are sure glad it did! It is the result of a spontaneous mutation in field corn and was grown by several Native American tribes. Also referred to as maize, and originally domesticated in Mexico, the United States is now the top producer of corn worldwide. Sweet corn, however, has only been grown commercially for a little over 200 years. In fact, it wasn't until the early 20th century that a yellow variety of sweet corn was developed. Fortunately, you can now find it easily in white, yellow, or bi-color (yellow and white kernels). The sweet corn we know today is even sweeter and more tender than the original varieties thanks to experts in plant breeding.

Health Benefits

As if we need another reason to love sweet corn, it is good for you too! When you scramble to get those tasty ears of sweet corn from your local producer you will be glad to know that there are many health benefits to sweet corn. Corn is a whole-grain food, high in fiber, low in fat, a source of essential nutrients and only about 80 calories per ear! Corn also contains vitamins that support eye health.

Facts on Fiber:

There are two types of dietary fiber our diets require – soluble and insoluble – and sweet corn contains both. In fact, on medium ear of sweet corn provides over 10% of the daily requirement of dietary fiber. This is an important part of overall health and helps reduce blood cholesterol. Insoluble fiber helps promote regularity while fiber-containing foods like corn also help provide a feeling of fullness and can help curb appetite and assist with weight management. Making

Meet the Farmers



Guldan Family Farm

New Ulm, MN

“We have been growing since 1987. We started in with grains but switched to vegetable production, and sweet corn was one of the first crops. We grow Native Gem, Ambrosia and Providence varieties. These have what we think to be the best flavors. Ambrosia is what we choose to freeze for ourselves too!”

“Buying local is important for the best taste, quality and texture. Sweet corn doesn’t have a long shelf life and buying Minnesota Grown ensures you get the freshest possible! Good sweet corn doesn’t need a lot of help. I even enjoy it raw, right in the field. Boiled briefly, until tender, with no added butter or salt is delicious too!”

sure you are including enough fiber in your diet is also associated with the reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes and can help keep your intestines and digestive system healthy.

Eyes on the Prize:

Sweet corn is known to contain vitamins, including lutein and zeaxanthin (pronounced zee-uh-zanthin). These are important carotenoids, and relatives of vitamin A, that support eye health and may have other disease-preventing benefits. Studies have shown that a high intake of these vitamins is associated with a significant reduction in the risk for macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness as we age. These vitamins may also aid in the slowed development of cataracts and can keep your vision healthy and clear!

The health benefits of lutein extend beyond the eyes. Research suggests that lutein may also prevent the hardening of arteries that can lead to heart attacks or strokes. It is associated with slowed bone loss, and reducing the risk of arthritis and various forms of cancer, especially lung.

We “Heart” Sweet Corn:

Corn is also a good source for vitamin folate. This vitamin plays a key role in supporting cardiovascular health. Corn also contributes thiamin, or vitamin B1, that helps the body convert carbohydrates to energy. It is essential for the proper functioning of the heart, muscles and nervous system.

Long story short, sweet corn is just as good for us as it is delicious!



Speaking of taste, there really is nothing like that first bite of Minnesota Grown sweet corn on a hot summer night. That is in no small part due to the fact that it is local! When it's in season, Minnesota farmers pick sweet corn every day, starting early in the morning when the weather is cool because

the warm temperatures can speed the change of sugar to starch. In fact, fresh corn on the cob will lose up to 40% of its sugar content within 6 hours of picking. It will even gradually lose sugar content while refrigerated! This is one of the reasons why buying fresh, local sweet corn will ensure it tastes better than anything shipped from far away.

When selecting your sweet corn, look for ears with brown, dried silk on the ends. You can even peel the husk back slightly in order to check for plump kernels.

CONTINENTAL CORN

One Cob, Many Flavors

Grown on every continent except Antarctica, corn is a staple vegetable for just about everyone on the planet. Thanks to Florida's climate, those in the U.S. can enjoy fresh sweet corn as soon as spring. With these simple recipes, tastes from around the world are just a grill away.

SOUTH AMERICA

Lime-Avocado Crema & Queso Fresco†

In a blender, combine 1 avocado, ¼c lime juice, 1 garlic clove, ½ bunch cilantro, ½c sour cream, and a pinch of sea salt. Blend until smooth. Adjust with a few table-spoons of water if necessary. Season corn with, sea salt, black pepper, and oil before grilling. Once cooked, spoon the lime-avocado crema on top, sprinkle with ½c grated queso fresco, and a pinch of cayenne pepper.

AFRICA

Harissa-Yogurt Spread

Whisk together 1c Greek yogurt, 1T extra virgin olive oil, 1 ½t fresh lemon juice, 2T harissa sauce, 1 crushed garlic clove, and sea salt to taste. Drizzle with olive oil, and garnish with chopped cilantro before serving.

EUROPE

Herbed Goat Cheese Spread

Combine 2oz fresh goat cheese, 2T butter, 1T fresh or 1t dried thyme, 1/8t black pepper, and a pinch of salt. Stir until smooth.

How To Grill Corn

There are many ways to grill sweet corn. Our favorite? Tying back the husks gives you a handle and beautiful, slightly charred kernels. Rotate regularly until the corn is warm and cooked on all sides, slather on your favorite blend, and savor.†

NORTH AMERICA

Maple Bourbon Butter with Crumbled Bacon

Combine 1 stick softened butter, 4t bourbon, 2t maple syrup, and a pinch of salt. Fold in crumbled bacon.

ASIA

Sriracha Butter

Mix 1/3c softened butter, and 3T sriracha until well incorporated.

AUSTRALIA

Honey-Ginger BBQ Sauce

Combine 1 ½c apple cider vinegar, ½c honey, ½c ketchup, 1 ½T hot sauce, 4 minced garlic cloves, 2T minced and peeled ginger, and 1t salt in a saucepan. Simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally until thickened, and reduced to about 1 ¼c—20-25 minutes.



†Quantities per 4-6 ears of corn.

A collaboration between the Fresh Sunshine Sweet Corn Council and Column Five.

Sweet corn can be prepared in a variety of ways. Although it is most commonly eaten off the cob, the kernels may also be removed and added to salads, casseroles, soups, pastas, and more. In order to remove the kernels from the cob, simply run a knife down the side of the ear. You can do this either before or after you have cooked the corn.

Sweet corn can be boiled, grilled, or even microwaved! If you are boiling, it is important to remove the husk and all the silk. Rinse the ears before dropping them into boiling water for 5-8 minutes. Butter is a delicious topping to boiled sweet corn, however adding it to the boiling water can result in tough corn! Sweet corn can also be microwaved for 1-2 minutes and carefully removed.

There are also several methods to grilling sweet corn. Feelings run strong among grilled-corn aficionados about whether or not you should husk the corn before roasting. Some prefer the "fire" flavor that comes from grilling shucked corn, while others counter that grilling in the husk keeps the kernels moist and tender. Most recipes, however, call for leaving the husks and silk on the ears, soaking them for 15 minutes to 2 hours, and then grilling them 10-20 minutes. You can also try peeling back the husks and silk, coating the kernels with butter and seasoning, and then pulling the husks back over the corn before grilling. YUM! For more ways to prepare your sweet corn, look to the recipes in this *Pick of the Month*, or the [Minnesota Grown Pinterest](#) page!

For a continental take on sweet corn, try the recipes featured in the infographic at left (courtesy of Walter Olivares in collaboration with the Fresh Sunshine Sweet Corn Council and Column Five). [Click here to enlarge the image.](#)

Unfortunately, sweet corn is a fairly perishable vegetable, so it is important to care for it properly. If you do not plan to use it immediately, leave the husk intact and store it in your refrigerator. Do not keep in a plastic bag or an airtight container, and prepare it within 5-7 days after picking for the freshest taste!

Now is the best time to stock up on sweet corn, as it is easy to freeze and will keep its "fresh from the cob" taste for up to 12 months. When freezing, it is best to use a vacuum sealer or freezer safe plastic bag. Boil the corn for 8-10 minutes, then quickly cool the cobs by placing them in very cold/ice water. To freeze the corn on the cob, simply place them into your freezer safe bags and seal. Otherwise, you can remove the kernels, separate them into serving size portions and seal them in your freezer safe bags. Always label and date your items!

A hearty "Thank you!" to Minnesota Grown member and sweet corn producer, Guldan Family Farm from New Ulm, MN for giving us an update on the season! To find a producer of fresh, local sweet corn near you, search the Minnesota Grown Directory at www.MinnesotaGrown.com!