

From the Food Bank Kitchen

CORN 101: FACTS AND RECIPES

Corn, also known as maize, is native to Central America and is one of the most popular cereal grains in the world. Eaten by both people and livestock (like cows), it is considered by many to be both a grain and a vegetable. In New England we enjoy native sweet corn each summer, but corn is an essential part of diets across the globe year-round. Corn is often used in homemade salads, salsas, soups, chowders, polenta, and hot vegetable dishes. It is also refined and processed to create corn meal, corn oil, breads, tortillas and chips, as well as less healthy products such as high-fructose corn syrup. We eat it fresh off the cob, in cans, frozen, and as popcorn. The U.S. is the number one consumer of corn per capita in the world!

Nutrition Facts: Whole-grain corn is a good source of fiber and many vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. People with **diabetes** should be aware that corn and peas are starchy vegetables and have more carbohydrates and sugars than most other vegetables. When planning meals, corn could be considered a starch like potato or rice; so in following the ChooseMyPlate recommendation to fill half one's plate with non-starchy vegetables, corn might ideally fill 1/4 of one's plate. A half-cup portion of fresh corn contains about 66 calories, 15 grams of carbohydrate, 2 grams of fiber, 3 grams of sugar, and 3 grams of protein (in comparison, 1/2 cup of broccoli has only 3 grams of carbohydrate).

Fresh vs canned vs frozen: fresh corn has only 12 milligrams of sodium per half cup. When buying canned corn, look for No Added Salt varieties; otherwise sodium may exceed 300 mg per half cup. You can rinse it through a colander to reduce the sodium by half. Frozen corn, unless packaged in a sauce or with seasonings, is generally similar to fresh corn in sodium levels.

Storage: Fresh corn may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Cooked corn that is frozen can be stored in the freezer for up to 6 months. If you have extra corn on the cob in season, cook it, cut the corn off the cob, and freeze the kernels in a freezer-safe container or bag. Add it to soups, stews, chili, or cornbread when the weather gets cooler!

Popcorn is a special variety of corn that pops when exposed to heat. This happens when water, trapped in its center, turns to steam, creating internal pressure, which makes the kernels explode. A highly popular whole grain snack, it is one of the most common whole-grain foods in the U.S. One cup of plain popped popcorn is inexpensive and can be very healthy, depending on how it is prepared. Some store-bought and movie-theater popcorns can be quite high in sodium or saturated fat; check and compare labels when purchasing microwave popcorn, or make your own at home for a healthier choice!

See reverse for recipes: Corn & Potato Chowder, Corn & Black Bean Salsa, and Crispy Summer Squash & Corn Pancakes

BASIC CORN PREPARATION METHODS



To Boil: Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add shucked corn until all the corn is completely submerged. Boil the corn for about 5 minutes, remove and place in bowl covered by a wet paper towel until serving.



To Microwave: Place 1 to 4 ears of un-shucked corn in the microwave. Microwave the corn on high for 3 minutes for 1 to 2 ears, or 4 minutes for 4 ears. Allow the corn to rest for 5 minutes before shucking so it continues to steam in the husk.



To Grill: Heat the grill to medium. Grill the corn in its husk with grill covered for about 15-20 minutes, periodically turning the corn to ensure even cooking. Remove the corn from the grill when tender and a fork easily enter the kernels. Some people prefer to shuck the corn prior to grilling and place the corn directly on the grill, so the kernels develop a charred and delicious flavor. You can also husk the corn, brush each ear with olive oil, wrap each in aluminum foil, and grill them.



To Bake: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the corn, in its husk directly on the rack in the oven and roast for 30 minutes or until corn is soft. When corn has cooled slightly after being removed from the oven, remove the husk and silk before eating. This preparation technique results in roasted corn with delicious flavor. Try this in the chowder recipe on reverse.

ROASTED CORN & POTATO CHOWDER

Serves 8

Recipe by Jamie Bronner

8 ears roasted corn, cut off the cobs
3 Tbsp canola or corn Oil
4 Tbsp flour (¼ cup)
3 Tbsp butter
2 lb potatoes (preferred: red Bliss or Yukon Gold)

4 c reduced sodium vegetable or chicken broth
3 leeks, white and pale green parts sliced thinly*
2 c whole milk
5 stalks celery, finely chopped
4 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

Directions: Heat oil and butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add potatoes, leeks and celery and cook until leeks are tender (about 6 minutes). Sprinkle the flour into the pot, stirring with a wooden spoon or rubber scraper until a thick roux forms. Add the stock, milk and roasted corn and bring to a simmer. Cook for 1 hour or until the potatoes start to fall apart. Remove from heat and stir in fresh chopped cilantro. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 310, Fat 12 gm, Saturated Fat 4 gm, Sodium 180 mg, Carbohydrate 46 gm, Fiber 5 gm, Protein 8 gm

* Can substitute for the leeks a mild, sweet onion such as Vidalia if preferred.

CORN & BLACK BEAN SALSA

Serves 8

Recipe by Jamie Bronner

1 (15 oz) can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 (15 oz) can sweet corn, drained and rinsed*
1 small red onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, grated
1 small red pepper, seeded and diced
4 Tbsp red wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar (or use lime juice if preferred)

½ to ¾ tsp cumin, to taste
3 Tbsp vegetable oil like olive or canola
½ tsp salt
½ tsp ground black pepper
(optional 3 Tbsp chopped cilantro or 2 tsp dried)
(optional: add 3 chopped scallions, sliced thin)
(optional: add in 2 medium tomatoes, cored and chopped)

Directions: In a medium bowl, mix the beans, corn, red onion, garlic, red pepper, and tomato, scallions, and cilantro if using. In a small bowl, make the dressing by whisking together the oil, vinegar, cumin, salt and pepper. Pour dressing over the bean and corn mixture and let sit covered in the fridge to give time for the flavors. Serve with tortilla chips or as a topping on a green salad.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 140, Fat 6 gm, Saturated Fat 0 gm, Sodium 150 mg, Carbohydrate 18 gm, Fiber 4 gm, Protein 5 gm

*You can also use fresh, cooked corn (about 4 medium sized ears). Corn can be boiled, grilled or roasted and cut off the cob and added into the recipe. If using frozen corn, thaw first and add about 1½ cups of kernels. Also, if you like spicier salsa, you can add in ¼ tsp of cayenne pepper for some kick.

CRISPY SUMMER SQUASH & CORN PANCAKES

Serves 10

Recipe adapted from Food & Wine

2 medium yellow summer squash, grated, squeezed dry
4 ears cooked corn, cut off cob
4 scallions, thinly sliced
2 large eggs, beaten
1 c flour

4 tsp baking powder
1 tsp paprika
4 Tbsp fresh parsley, minced
Oil for frying
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions: Grate 2 yellow squashes on a cheese grater and squeeze dry. In a medium sized bowl mix the squash, corn, eggs, scallion, parsley, flour, and baking powder gently to just combine. In a large, non-stick skillet or pan add oil and heat over a medium heat. When the oil is hot, add heaping 1/3 cup mounds to the skillet and lightly press down to flatten. Cook for about 3 minutes until golden brown on each side and drain on paper towels to remove excess oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve with lemon wedges.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 200, Fat 13 gm, Saturated Fat 2 gm, Sodium 240 mg, Carbohydrate 19 gm, Fiber 2 gm, Protein 4 gm