



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

CORN



Corn is a cereal grass that produces large ears filled with starchy kernels covered in husks. Sweet corn is a member of the Poaceae or grass family. Corn was first domesticated in Mesoamerica over 10,000 years ago. Mesoamerica is the area between Central Mexico and Costa Rica. Corn made its way to North America through indigenous trade routes. After the Spanish conquest, corn plants were taken to Europe and from there made their way around the world. There are six major types of corn, including dent or field, flint, flour, pod, popcorn, and sweet corn. There are over 200 varieties of corn worldwide. Corn has a mild, sweet flavor that deepens as it cooks. It can be boiled, baked, ground, grilled, mashed, popped, roasted, sautéed, and steamed. Michigan sweet corn is harvested from July through September and field corn is harvested from October through November.



CORN IS

- A source of fiber. Fiber helps us feel fuller and benefits the digestive and cardiovascular systems.
- A source of folate. Folate supports the production of healthy red blood cells and is important during periods of rapid growth, like pregnancy.
- A source of magnesium. Magnesium helps build strong bones and supports the function of the heart, nerves, muscles, and more.

MICHIGAN MADE

Michigan farmers harvest nearly 1.5 million bushels of sweet corn for the processed and fresh market each year. They also harvest about 290 million bushels of field corn for export as livestock feed, industrial products and biofuels like ethanol. Many Michigan farms offer “u-pick” operations where consumers can hand pick their own corn. Some farmers cut their corn fields into popular attractions known as “corn mazes” designed for a fun family-friendly outing or haunted attraction to align with Halloween celebrations. The southern third of the Lower Peninsula is known as Michigan’s “corn belt.” Saginaw and Lenawee Counties are the largest producers of corn in the state.

FUN FACTS

- Corn is the largest crop grown in the United States.
- The kernel is the seed of the corn plant.
- An average ear of corn has 800 kernels in 16 rows.
- Sweet corn kernels can be yellow, white, or bicolor.
- Microwave or grill corn to retain the most nutrients.
- Popcorn is made from a type of flint corn. The seeds burst into fluffy puffs when heated.
- Polenta is an Italian porridge made from ground flint corn, butter, and Parmesan.
- Hominy is made from dried field corn soaked in lime or lye (nixtamalized) and used for grits and masa.
- Every corn cob has a husk as a protective covering to help the corn grow.
- There is one silk for each kernel on an ear of corn. Corn silk catches pollen and moisture which helps corn grow.
- Corn cobs are filled with flavor and can be used to flavor soups, gumbos, and rice or instead of wood chips to smoke meat and fish.
- Indigenous Peoples in the Americas refer to corn as one of the “Three Sisters” crops. They are planted in mounds with beans and squash by Indigenous women farmers. The plants nurture each other like family, growing better together. This form of planting became common across North America.
- Most countries refer to corn as maize.
- Corn is considered a vegetable, but botanically, corn is a grain and a fruit.

BUYING AND STORING

- Select sweet corn with fresh golden silks, green husks, and shiny, firm, plump kernels.
- Store sweet corn in the husk in the refrigerator for up to three days. To freeze: Blanch corn kernels or corn on the cob before freezing. Corn will keep frozen in a plastic bag or container up to one year.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.

MORE THAN FRESH

In addition to fresh, corn is available frozen and canned. When buying packaged corn, be sure to read labels and choose items that are reduced or low-sodium (salt), or no salt added, low in saturated fat, and with no added sugar.

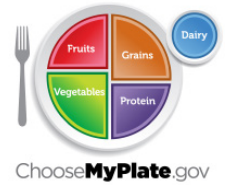




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EAT WITH MYPLATE

MyPlate focuses on whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and half the plate being fruits and vegetables. Corn is part of the Vegetable Group. Most people need 2–3 cups of vegetables per day. For more information visit: myplate.gov.



IT ALL COUNTS

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% vegetable and fruit juices count toward your daily MyPlate goals.

CORN, ZUCCHINI AND TOMATO PASTA

Time: 30 minutes | Makes: 6 servings | Serving Size: 1½–2 cups

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories 277, Carbohydrate 51g, Dietary Fiber 8g, Protein 10g, Total Fat 7g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 1mg, Sodium 35mg

Always wash hands before preparing food. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.



INGREDIENTS

- One 12-ounce box whole-grain pasta like campanelle, cavatappi, fusilli, or penne
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced or ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved lengthwise
- 1 cup zucchini, chopped

- 1½ cups fresh corn kernels, about 2 medium fresh ears of corn*
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves, torn, or 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated or shredded

**May also use 1½ cups frozen corn or canned corn with no salt added, drained and rinsed.*

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Do not rinse. Return pasta to pot to rest.
2. While pasta is cooking, heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat.
3. Add garlic, tomatoes, and zucchini. Sauté until vegetables soften, about 3 minutes, shaking pan occasionally.
4. Add corn, raise heat to medium-high and sauté until corn is heated through and begins to turn golden, 5–7 minutes.
5. Add pasta, reduce heat to medium-low, stir regularly until all ingredients are combined well and heated through.
6. Add basil and Parmesan. Serve hot or chill to serve cold.

TRY THIS

- For extra juicy corn on the cob, leave husks on and soak in water for 30 minutes before grilling.
- Drizzle fresh cooked corn on the cob with a little olive oil, lemon juice, and Parmesan.
- Add sweet corn to burritos, casseroles, chowders, chili, eggs, rice, salads, salsas, soups, and tarts.

CHANGE IT UP

- Add sliced onions, mushrooms, and yellow squash.
- Try with fresh marjoram or thyme instead of basil.
- Add a 3 cups marinara sauce (or one 24-ounce jar) at the end of Step 4. Heat and continue.

