

# Stalking the grocery shelves

■ Fresh corn season is here, and this recipe combines kernels with tomatoes and herbs in a flavorful chowder

By **Gretchen McKay**  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Corn is starting to arrive in grocery stores. I also spotted local Amish tomatoes at Pennsylvania Macaroni Co. in the Strip District last week, which got me thinking, “Why not combine the two in a super-easy soup?”

Cookbook author and television personality Carla Hall (you probably know her from “The Chew” on ABC) has just the recipe. It’s a colorful corn chowder enlivened ever so lightly with a trio of Mexican flavors — cumin, chili and epazote, a funky and aromatic oregano-like herb. It’s one of the first dishes she made in her first restaurant job at the Henley Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., she writes in her cookbook, “Carla’s Comfort Foods.”

It adjusted her perception of what a corn soup should look like. Up to that point, she hadn’t worked with Mexican flavors, and so thought that corn chowder should be yellow in color. But because the recipe includes tomatoes and chilies, it’s tinted red.

The soup comes together beautifully. I had some leftover barbecued chicken, so I chopped it up and threw it in the chowder after it was blended.

For a light summer meal, serve it with a leafy green salad and a loaf of really great bread.

## TOMATO-CORN CHOWDER

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 large yellow onions, diced
- Kosher salt
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried epazote or oregano
- 1 teaspoon ground Mexican chili, such as ancho
- 1 small yuca or Idaho potato, peeled and finely diced
- 4 cups unsalted vegetable broth
- 4 cups diced tomatoes
- 5 ears corn, husks and silks removed, kernels cut off and reserved, cobs reserved
- Mexican crema or sour cream, for serving (optional if you want to keep it vegan)
- Lime wedges, for serving
- Avocado, peeled, pitted, and sliced, for serving
- Fresh cilantro leaves, chopped, for serving

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the cumin, epazote or oregano and chili and cook, stirring, for 1 minute.



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS  
Tomato corn chowder offer the taste of summer and is super easy to throw together.

## SAFE FOOD

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These temperatures are recommended for food safety and may differ from personal preferences. Fish should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 F, or until the flesh is opaque and flakes with a fork.

After cooking, food must be maintained at a temperature above 140 F to prevent the growth of bacteria. The “danger zone,” between 40 degrees and 140 degrees, is the temperature range in which bacteria will start to grow and multiply rapidly.

There are other foods which, if left out at room temperature (or higher) for more than 2 to 3 hours, will also see bacterial growth. These foods include cooked potatoes, rice and pasta. Foods with dairy, similar to protein foods, are problematic if left unrefrigerated for more than 2 or 3 hours. The time is less, 1 hour or less, if foods are served outside during exceptionally hot weather.

After food is served and

consumed, any leftovers should be refrigerated as soon as possible. To cool items such as soups, or large cuts of meat, divide into smaller containers, allow to cool and then refrigerate. A large container of something such as chili should never be placed immediately in the refrigerator while it is still hot. The time required to cool large amounts of hot food allows bacteria to grow. Likewise, food should not be left out, either to be eaten, or on a counter to cool, for more than 2 or 3 hours.

To prevent food-borne illnesses, make sure all utensils are clean before cooking. Those handling food should wash their hands before and after handling any raw meat. Do not use the same plate or utensils used for raw meat as for other food, either cooked or raw, such as fruit or salad ingredients. The bacteria from the meat plate or knife will transfer, or cross contaminate, to the other foods.

It goes without saying, personal hygiene is a must. Hands should be washed before handling food, after

touching raw meat, after using the restroom, touching nose, hair, mouth, touching pets and after coughing, sneezing or nose blowing. Hand sanitizer is not a substitute for washing hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds. This amount of time is long enough to say the “ABC’s” or sing “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

You cannot see, smell or taste bacteria. The “sniff test” is not a measure of whether something is contaminated. The adage, “when in doubt, throw it out,” is a good one for safety reasons. Eating undercooked meat, poultry or eggs is a risk factor for food-borne illnesses. Ever notice that disclaimer on restaurant menus? The one about consuming undercooked meat, poultry, fish or eggs increases the chance of contracting a food-borne illness? It’s there for a reason.

Food-borne illnesses are unpleasant, to be sure. The bacteria can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramps, but may also include chills.

Time of onset can vary with the type of food. According to www.fda.gov, symptoms can occur anywhere from 1 to 96 hours after consuming the tainted food. Symptoms generally last about 24 hours, but can last up to 2 weeks and in some cases may require hospitalization. Treatment includes consuming no food, replacing lost fluids with water or sucking on ice chips, until symptoms have resolved themselves. Later, introduce

foods slowly, such as rice and plain toast, as tolerated. There are also over-the-counter products that may be helpful, but always check with your primary care provider before using them.

There are certain vulnerable populations that should be especially mindful of the possibility of contracting food-borne illnesses. These include children and babies, the elderly, pregnant women and individuals with compromised

immune systems, or those with chronic illnesses. With a few precautions, food-borne illnesses can be avoided and everyone will have a good barbecue experience, and a safe and healthy summer season.

Ann Bloom has worked for the OSU Extension Service for 15 years as a nutrition educator. She studied journalism and education at Washington State University. She lives in Enterprise.

## Market swings making you uneasy? Let’s talk.



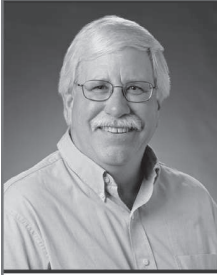
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Photo by Ashley O'Toole

A ghost sign reveals another name for Bohnenkamp’s business: Hometown Hardware.

## BOHNENKAMP

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This new three-story brick building on the corner of Adams and Elm truly exemplified the rapid expansion of the city. It was constructed to house offices for a variety of businesses as well as the rapidly growing furniture and hardware business of the Bohnenkamps.

However, fire struck La Grande again on Sept. 26, 1913, and the building was extensively damaged. The building was rebuilt and with a fourth story added.

W. H. Bohnenkamp died in 1937 after a life of service to his community as both a businessman, builder and civic leader. Genevieve and W. H. raised three sons, Chase, Lynn and

Hal, in their Second Street home, known as “The Castle,” where many festive parties were held in the ballroom. All three boys came into the business which grew over the years providing furniture, hardware and appliances to generations of the community. The store, also known as Hometown Hardware, closed in the late 1970s and the last of the brothers died in 1986. The Bohnenkamp families and the store played an active part of the community for many years.

There are three ghost signs on this building. One, on the top of the building on the alley side, advertises “Four Floors of Fine Furniture.” A second colorful sign appears at the top of the building on the east side, with a third sign atop that for Hometown Hardware. Keep looking up! Enjoy!

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