



## A consummate corn chowder recipe

Corn chowder is a perfect summer dish. The flavors and texture evolve with reheating. You can even serve it cold for a picnic in the shade.

Ellen M. Banner/Seattle Times-TNS

## (and it's vegan, too)

By **BETHANY JEAN CLEMENT**  
The Seattle Times

**S**EATTLE — Corn chowder does not sound like a thrill. A ubiquitous vegetable plus a soup intended to make use of any kind of ubiquitous stuff using also-ubiquitous milk and/or cream, plus other ubiquitous vegetables. ... should be fine. Not amazing, however. And, then, vegan corn chowder — not to cast aspersions on anyone's dietary choices, but subtracting the dairy from the situation ... maybe less good.

Chef Kristi Brown of Seattle's stellar Communion makes **AMAZING** vegan corn chowder. Apologies for the all-caps, but this is corn chowder that makes one want to **SHOUT ABOUT IT**. To quote myself from January 2021 (for I already have rhapsodized about this corn chowder):

“This superlative soup could fool the biggest butter-lover: luxurious in texture yet also earthy, sweet and slightly smoky, spicy but sneakily so. The star ingredient is joined by a full supporting cast of sweet potato, carrot, celery and onion, served topped with lots of green onion diagonal-cut for peppery freshness.” In December 2020, I also correctly described this vegan corn chowder as “magnificent.”

I pestered Brown for details back then, and she would say only that it is definitely vegan, that very good olive oil comes into play, that saving lots of vegetable scraps to make your own vegetable stock is clutch, and that the seasoning is her own mix of “like 18 different spices” that she calls Sez’. She says she’s going to start selling Sez’, and we all should hope fervently for this gift to humanity.

Brown’s vegan corn chowder is so good that everybody wanted to eat it,

so at Communion they had to make it sometimes 20 gallons at a time, and she got sick of it, and she says she might never put it back on the menu again, or then again, she might sometime. Genius is allowed its caprice.

Summer is the best season for corn chowder because fresh, local sweet corn is **ALSO AMAZING**, and, if you’re not going to eat it right off the cob, unsullied by anything, corn chowder is, factually, the only other way to go. Also: Corn chowder is excellent served cold in the shade on a hot afternoon, possibly with a glass of rosé (or eaten out of the pot whilst cooling off in front of the open refrigerator at any hour, day or night).

On behalf of us all, I recently re-pestered Brown via text message about her vegan corn chowder, and while she is unwilling to part with the

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**WENDY SCHMIDT**  
BETWEEN THE ROWS

## Sunchokes — by any name — are tasty, great for gardens

**J**erusalem artichokes are not artichokes at all. *Helianthus tuberosa*, also known as sunchokes, sun root, earth apple, or wild sunflower, are part of the asteraceae, (aster, or composite) family. They were one of the staple foods for Native Americans of the Midwest, very valuable toward the end of winter when other foods had run out, and before new growth started in the spring.

Sunchokes can be eaten raw, or cooked and stir-fried. Raw, they taste similar to water chestnuts. Cooked, they’re similar to artichokes. They are high in carbs, so need to be avoided if you’re on a keto diet. Containing high amounts of inulin instead of starch (which converts to fructose, not sucrose, in the digestive tract, making it better for diabetics) they keep glucose levels stable and help lower blood pressure.

There are at least 52 varieties of sunflower. Most of them are annuals and all are edible. You can batter and deep-fry the flower buds, harvest the seeds or leave them to be harvested by birds.

Livestock, especially chickens and horses, benefit from eating sunflower seeds. This should be a supplement, not 100% of the animal’s diet. The oil improves the quality of fur and feathers.

Sunchokes are 4 feet to 9 feet tall. Not all sunflowers are so tall. There are dwarf varieties which are good candidates for container-growing. To have a continuous supply of sunflowers blooming, practice succession planting (planting a few seeds every week or so). By late July or the first week of August, stop planting additional sunflowers. We sometimes get an early frost. In case our frosts are late, it is worth taking a chance on later planting.



Chris Walker/Chicago Tribune-TNS

The sunchoke, also called a Jerusalem artichoke, is lumpy like ginger root but versatile and rich in potassium and iron.

Sunchokes are perennial, but “mammoth,” *Helianthus annuus*” (the common sunflower), “*H. debilis*” (cucumber leaf sunflower) are annuals especially attractive to bees.

You don’t need a real garden to grow sunflowers. Growing is fine in a pot with good drainage. Container growing is the only sure way of controlling the invasive nature of sunchokes. But, I’m not sure if being invaded by sunchokes would be a bad thing, considering they are a good food source.

Plant a sunflower room for a small child by planting tall sunflowers (“mammoth” variety or sunchokes) around the perimeter of a large flowerbed. Seeds should be 12 to 18 inches apart and 1 to 2 inches deep. The soil should have good drainage and be given at least 1 inch of water per week.

Sunflowers add depth and height to your landscape by planting them as a screen at the back of your flowerbeds. Although sunflowers also occur in blue and pink to red, the yellow varieties seem to exude the happiest vibes.

Joyful gardening and thanks for reading!

■ Wendy Schmidt is a longtime gardener. She lives in La Grande.

## History of the Grande Ronde Valley House, Grace Building



**GINNY MAMMEN**  
OUT AND ABOUT

**T**he first known building, called the Missouri House, at the northeast corner of Adams and Fir in downtown La Grande was shown on the 1889 Sanborn map. The date it was constructed is unknown. Ten years later, in 1899, William H. Ferguson and his wife, Anna, came to La Grande where William became manager of the establishment. In the early 1900s William purchased the business and the name was changed to Grande Ronde Valley House. William passed away in 1913, at age 65, after a bout with pneu-



The Grande Ronde Valley House, built before 1889 at the corner of Adams and Fir in downtown La Grande, was razed in 1928 and replaced by the Grace Building. Contributed Photo

monia. The boarding house continued in business until the late 1920s.

Over the years various small businesses occupied the ground floor lobby of the Grande Ronde

Valley House while the rooms on the second floor were rented to locals, weary travelers or traveling salesmen such as Professor C.H. Jones and A. Stewart, magnetic healers, who professed to

treat all diseases.

In the early 1920s Eugene and Ed Moon announced they were establishing a drug store in the lobby of the Grande Ronde Valley House. The Moon brothers had grown up in La Grande and were the grandsons of Oscar Wheeler Moon, the engineer on the first train to arrive La Grande in 1884. It wasn’t long before Eugene and Ed were joined by their brother, Elmer, who had been working for Blummer Frank Wholesale Drug Company. Then in November of 1927 Harry, a fourth brother, returned to La Grande from Portland and joined the firm.

Eugene stayed in the business for about four years and

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