

Fast food, from home

Chicken teams up with corn salad for quick weeknight meal

By **GRETCHEN MCKAY**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Now that the kids are back in school, it's back to the grind of running from one place to the next, with a home-cooked dinner often an afterthought.

What you need in your culinary arsenal is a slew of easy weeknight meals that come together in about a half-hour with a few easy-to-find, seasonal ingredients but still deliver big on taste.

Cookbook author Mark Bittman puts sweet corn to good use in this simple chicken recipe. After charring the cut kernels in a hot skillet, he tosses the corn with crispy and zesty bites of chopped radish, scallion and cilantro and then dresses it simply — but superbly — with a generous squeeze of lime juice. He pairs the fresh and crunchy salad with juicy (and inexpensive) broiled chicken thigh, sprinkled with spices and rubbed with garlic.

I doubled the recipe so I had leftovers for lunch the next day. If you can't find fresh corn, substitute frozen. Serve over steamed rice, garnished with a dollop of sour cream.



Roasted chicken thigh teams up with a crisp and zesty corn salad for a quick and easy weeknight meal. Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

CORN SALAD WITH GARLIC CHICKEN

4 ears fresh corn
Salt
2 cloves garlic, peeled and halved
3 or 4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 12 ounces)
2 tablespoons good-quality vegetable oil
Dash or two of cayenne
2 teaspoons ground cumin
Pepper
8 radishes
1 bunch scallions
1 bunch fresh cilantro
2 limes
Sour cream, for garnish
Cooked plain white rice, for serving

Put a large skillet over medium-high heat. Turn broiler to high and put the rack 4 inches from heat.

Husk corn, trim and cut kernels off the cob.

Put corn in the skillet and sprinkle with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the corn chars lightly, 5-10 minutes

Put chicken on rimmed baking sheet. Rub with 2 tablespoons oil, and sprinkle with cayenne, cumin, salt and pepper. Broil, turning once, until lightly browned on both sides and just cooked through, 5-10 minutes per side.

When corn is lightly charred, put in a large bowl.

Trim and chop radishes and add to bowl. Trim and chop scallions and add to bowl. Chop 1 cup cilantro and add to bowl. Halve limes and squeeze juice into the bowl.

When chicken is done, remove from broiler and rub all over with raw garlic.

Toss the corn mixture together; taste and adjust seasoning. To serve, slice chicken as thick as you like and lay the slices over the top of the salad.

Garnish with a dollop of sour cream, if you like, with rice on the side.

Serves 4.

— *"How to Cook Everything Fast"* (revised edition) by Mark Bittman (Harvest, \$40)



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DOROTHY FLESHMAN
DORY'S DIARY

Sugar sacks and the era of no waste

How I happen to have a 100-pound sugar sack stuffed with some soft material for show among my belongings is a little unclear because there is no memory of my ever wearing a dress, slip, or panties designed by my mother of such material or even from a flour sack.

Still, there is a distant memory of there being such clothing in the early days, when nothing was wasted and a use was found for everything until there was no longer a way to turn items into one more useful way.

Even from the rag-bag, washed clean and ironed, torn into strips, and braided into rugs, there was a way to waste not, want not. And, for what you didn't have the money to pay, you went without.

One learned these things at an early age. You also learned to save until you could afford the cherished item.

The sugar sack of which I speak is not the paper bag of 4 to 10 pounds of sugar or flour, but is of a cotton fabric that once confined the 100-pound ingredients safely.

In this case, the sugar was refined and packed by the W. J. McCahan sugar and refining and molasses Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and had been tested and approved by the Good Housekeeping Bureau. The cloth itself was made in the U.S.A., bragging in a way as such.

Flour came in similar sacks with their own advertising. Housewives, then, had to remove the printing with bleach for using the sack material for diapers or other uses. To re-dye the cloth, the dye came from heating and soaking the material in something like berry juice until of the desired depth of color.

Bessie (Phillips) Gorbett, an historian in the 1890s, mentioned it in her history of having gathered shumac (sumac) leaves for a bright red color in their everyday dresses and going without shoes in the summertime to save the footwear for school and winter weather. Their dresses were handmade from a Gray log house pattern owned by the mother.

If the home had a sewing machine, it would have been foot-pedaled or the material sewn by hand.

While I escaped those earlier days, I remember their use in the generations before and felt so lucky to be able to shop in Montgomery Ward's or J. C. Penney's store when in town or ordering ready-made purchases from their catalogs, the out-of-date publications destined finally for the outhouse.

See, *Sacks*/Page B2

Should you get your flu shot and COVID booster together?

By **LISA M. KRIEGER**
The Mercury News

The flu shot is as familiar an October ritual as football, foliage and Halloween.

But health officials are urging Americans to get the new flu shot and COVID booster at the same time — the sooner, the better.

"Right where we are now — that's a good time to be vaccinated," influenza expert Dr. Lisa Grohskopf of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told the nation's physicians in a conference call late last week.

That's ahead of time, by traditional measures. Flu season most often peaks in February — and our levels of protective antibodies are

at their highest about two weeks after the shot, then wane over the next four to six months.

Yet this year's season could start early if it follows the pattern seen elsewhere in the world. So a delay could catch people unprepared.

There's another concern: People may not want to make two trips to the vaccination clinic — so they may get the new COVID booster but fail to return for the flu.

Is there a perfect time to be vaccinated?

If you have a crystal ball, "it's 14 days before the flu attacks the community that you're living in," said Dr. Darvin Scott Smith, clinical lead for flu vaccination at Kaiser Permanente Northern Cali-

fornia, who has already gotten his shot.

Here's the problem: Nobody knows when that will be.

Nearly four decades of CDC data shows that 45% of flu seasons peak in February.

But 18% of the time, the season peaks as early as December. In another 16%, it peaks as late as March. Protection isn't assured until two weeks after your shot.

"It is impossible to predict the flu season with any accuracy," said Dr. Kelly L. Moore, president of Immunize.org, a nonprofit group that works to increase immunization rates.

If you want to save time and travel, said Moore, get your flu shot when you get the new COVID booster, now widely available at

California's pharmacies and clinics. It's safe and will spare you a return trip. There's no data to show that side effects will be worse.

A flu shot won't protect against COVID, and a COVID shot won't protect against flu. The two vaccines are very different.

"I really believe this is why God gave us two arms — one for the flu shot and the other one for the COVID shot," White House COVID coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha said at a Sept. 6 news briefing.

Children who need two doses of the flu vaccine — those six months through 8 years who have never been vaccinated — should receive their first dose immediately, said experts.



Seth Herald/Getty Images-TNS, File

See, *Shot*/Page B2 A sign directing traffic to a drive-through flu shot station.