

CORN: SUMMER'S SWEET GIFT



KITCHEN DIVA PHOTO

Sweet corn has been bred to have higher levels of natural sugars, one of the reasons it is so popular. It also is an excellent source of dietary fiber, and it contains vitamin C, along with niacin and folate — two of the B group vitamins.

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Yesterday, my sister gave me half of the bag of fresh, sweet corn she'd purchased at the market. Corn is best eaten as soon as possible after harvesting, as its sugar converts to starch.

To show my thanks, I husked all of the corn. I decided I'd use my share in a variety of different ways: roasted on the cob, as creamed corn and shelled in recipes like my Zesty Chicken With Fresh Corn, Baby Spinach and Fettucine.

Corn was grown by Native Americans long before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. Over thousands of years, Native Americans used special cultivation methods to transform maize into the domesticated plant and the wide varieties of corn that we eat today.

Sweet corn is sold by color, not variety. Our colors are white, yellow and bi-color (white and yellow mixed). Sweet corn has been bred to have higher levels of natural sugars, one of the reasons it is so popular.

Sweet corn is one of the few vegetables that is a good source of the kind of slowly digested carbohydrate that gives you long-lasting energy. It also is an excellent source of dietary fiber,

and it contains vitamin C, along with niacin and folate — two of the B group vitamins. It's also a good source of potassium, and can help balance the body's fluids if you eat salty foods.

Here are a few tips for selecting an ear of corn:

- Cobs should be fully filled, i.e. covered in corn kernels
- Kernels should be bright, plump and show no signs of wrinkling
- The leaves of the husk should be intact, fresh, green and not spotted or damaged
- Cobs should be free of disease and insects
- Sweet corn should be free of any foul odors.

Store corn in the husk in the vegetable crisper or in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Corn is best eaten within one day of purchase, which is a good excuse for eating one of summer's sweet gifts right away!

— Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis

ZESTY CHICKEN WITH FRESH CORN

12 ounces fettuccine (3/4 box)
3 tablespoons olive oil
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (6 ounces each)
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
1 teaspoon ground sage
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1 1/2 teaspoons black pepper
4 green onions (white and green parts, roots discarded), cut into 1/4 inch pieces
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1/2 tablespoon flour
1/2 cup chicken broth
1 cup corn kernels (from 1 to 2 ears, or frozen)
3/4 cup half-and-half cream
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese (1 ounce)
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 cups baby spinach (1 1/2 ounces)
1 lemon, cut into wedges

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain.

2. Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Season chicken on both sides with cumin, paprika, sage, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper.

3. Cook chicken until golden brown and cooked through, 6 to 7 minutes per side. Transfer chicken to plate, cover loosely to keep warm and set aside.

4. Meanwhile, add remaining tablespoon of oil to pan. Add green onions, garlic, red pepper flakes and 1/2 teaspoon each of salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until garlic is tender, 1 to 3 minutes. Add flour and stir for 1 minute. Add chicken broth and turn heat to high; stir until well-combined and liquid thickens slightly.

5. Turn heat down to low, and add the corn. Simmer until corn is tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in half and half.

6. Add pasta and 1/4 cup of the Parmesan cheese, the nutmeg and remaining 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper, and toss to combine. Fold in spinach. Top each serving with a chicken breast. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese. Serve with lemon wedges. Serves 4.

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