



About Corn History

Interestingly, the earliest corn seems to have been a popcorn variety. It dates back at least 6,000 years. Kernels of popcorn have hard shells and enough moisture inside that when they are heated and this water turns to steam, the kernels explode, turning inside out. In 1779, corn was first referred to as “sweet corn” because of its sugar content and sweetness. Even today, researchers continue to work on modifications with our sweet corn hybrids.

The Plant

The average ear of corn has about 800 kernels. Packed into these plump kernels are favor and nutrition. With our desire for sweetness, some of the nutrition qualities of the corn has been surrendered. Even so, a fresh, well-prepared ear of sweet corn still offers a significant amount of vitamin A, B-complex vitamins, phosphorous, and potassium, along with vegetable protein and fiber. When corn is combined with most beans or dairy products they form a complete protein.

Measured by production volume, corn is the third most important food crop in the world, behind wheat and rice. In terms of acreage planted, it is second only to wheat. While it is best known as a common food for human consumption, it is also considered a grass.

How to Buy

When shopping for the perfect ear of corn, look for bright green husks, fresh-looking silks, and plump but not too large kernels. You may want to peel down the husk and visually inspect the kernels to make sure they are not dried out. The best time to purchase fresh corn is May through October.

How to Prepare

The sugars in corn begin to turn to starches as soon as the ear is picked; therefore, it is important to cook, preserve, or eat corn as soon as possible after it is harvested. It's not uncommon to find a worm or two enjoying your corn while it is still in the husk. There is no need to discard the full ear; simply cut out the damaged portion and go ahead with preparation.

Boil, Steam, or Roast

Once the ear is shucked and the silks are removed, washed ears should be placed in a pot of boiling water for three to six minutes. Do not add salt to the boiling water because that will cause the kerns to be tough. If using the steaming method, steam ears for six to ten minutes. Roasting is also a common method of preparation. Roast ears for six to ten minutes. If you are not interested in eating the corn on the cob, you can remove the kernels after the ears are cooked.

How to Store

Use fresh corn as soon as possible. Storing sacrifices some of corn's sweet flavor and crisp texture. Fresh corn in the husks should be stored in the refrigerator immediately after it is purchased or picked. After cooking, store cooled leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to four or five days.

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