

Pennsylvania Sweet Corn Is Here

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — After two years of late starts for Pennsylvania's vegetable crops due to cool spring weather, 1998 is shaping up to be an early start for many vegetable crops including the all-time favorite—sweet corn. Abundant supplies of fresh, locally grown sweet corn are expected this season.

Many growers will achieve their goal of supplying Pennsylvania sweet corn for the Fourth of July holiday and some growers who cover their early crop with plastic are already harvesting. In certain localities, however, growers do not expect the season to really begin until mid-July.

"Mild weather in early spring allowed many growers to plant extra early," explains Fred Funk, former chairman of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program and Lancaster County corn grower. "Most areas experienced extended periods of rain in early May followed by cool and dry periods that may cause some gaps in the harvest sequence. The recent warm weather has increased the sugar content so that the early varieties are unusually sweet this year," he adds.

For sweet corn, sufficient rainfall at the critical periods of pollination and ear development is essential for quality corn although many Pennsylvania growers are equipped with irrigation to provide the needed moisture during the critical periods. Some growers cover their early sweet corn with clear plastic mulch creating a greenhouse environment over the seeds. This encourages quick germination and early growth, producing corn one or two weeks earlier than a crop grown on bare ground.

The key to good sweet corn is freshness. The sugar in sweet corn rapidly begins turning to starch within hours after being harvested. About 40% of the sugar can be lost in six hours at room temperature. Refrigeration slows this process, but the sooner corn is eaten after harvesting, the better.

Many growers are growing sugar-enhanced or super-sweet varieties that genetically have more sugar in the kernels. Some of these early sugar-enhanced varieties were developed at

Penn State University. Because they have more sugar to begin with, they can be stored for longer periods and still have acceptable sweetness. However, standard sweet corn varieties, when purchased freshly harvested, will still have a delicious, traditional corn flavor and sweetness.

According to growers across the state most Pennsylvanians prefer bi-color corn, traditionally known as Butter and Sugar. However, in south central and southeastern Pennsylvania, white is the preferred corn. Certain localities and clientele still like their corn to be yellow so many growers continue to grow yellow varieties on some of their acreage.

Regardless of the color, Pennsylvanians can expect to enjoy an abundant supply of sweet corn each year. It is the leading vegetable crop in the Commonwealth with about 19,000 acres grown annually. Most of this sweet corn acreage is grown for fresh market sales. As a result, Pennsylvania ranks as the sixth largest fresh sweet corn producing state in the nation. Fresh corn will be available from July into October. About 2,700 acres of the sweet corn acreage are grown to be processed into frozen, dried or canned corn products available year round.

While fresh sweet corn is a delicious ingredient in many recipes, it is most popular served right on the cob, and is so simple to prepare. Simply boil husked ears for 5-7 minutes, or grill the ears in the husk for 15-20 minutes after soaking them in water for about 10 minutes. Fresh corn on the cob is also easily prepared in the microwave by wrapping two husked ears in a damp paper towel and cooking them for seven minutes on high power, turning the ears once.

No matter how it's prepared, fresh sweet corn is a good source of vitamins A and C, and a single ear contains only 90 calories. The following corn recipes from the 125th Anniversary Pennsylvania State Grange Commemorative Cookbook are two additional ways to include corn in your meal:

CORN CHOWDER (serves 6)

3 potatoes, diced
6 cups corn
3 hard boiled eggs, diced
1 quart milk
1 pint water
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper

Cook potatoes in the water for 5 minutes or until soft. Add corn, butter, eggs, milk and seasonings. Cook 10-15 minutes and serve. Use fresh corn when possible.

Joan Mauser,
North Jackson Grange #1740

CORN PIE (serves 6-8)

3 cups fresh corn
3 hard boiled eggs
2/3 cup milk
1/4 cup flour
1/4 stick butter
1 teaspoon salt
dash or pepper
1 double 9" pie crust

Make pie shell. Mix corn, eggs, salt, flour and milk together. Put into pie shell. Dot with butter and sprinkle with pepper. Put pie crust on top. Bake at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes. Then finish baking at 250 degrees F for 1 hour.

Arlene Fachler,

Elizabethtown Grange #2076
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Quick buying tips for Pennsylvania Sweet Corn

The Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program offers these tips when buying sweet corn:

- Look for fresh green husks and ears that are filled all the way to the tip.
- Kernels should be tender, full and firm enough to puncture easily under the slightest pressure.
- To preserve the corn's sugar content and flavor, refrigerate immediately after purchase.



4-H County Fair

For the first time, the Gloucester County N.J. 4-H Fair will run from Thursday, July 23 through Sunday, July 26.

For all four days, the Gloucester county 4-H Fairgrounds in Mullica Hill will become a beehive of activity. Route #77 will swarm with a steady stream of vehicles bringing more than 900 4-Hers and their exhibits to show off to more than 12,000 fair visitors. The fair hours will be Thursday, July 23, from 4p.m.-9:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, July 24 and 25 from 9a.m. - 9:00 p.m. and Sunday, July 26 from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Four the four days of the annual Gloucester County 4-H Fair the animal barns will burst with rabbits, horses, pigs, goats, steers and cows, and the exhibit barn will show visitors 4-H woodworking, needle work, quilts, crafts, vegetables, and flowers.

Exhibiting marks the culmination of a full year of work for 4-H members.

In addition to 4-H exhibits and shows, the fair will also host both the New Jersey Peach Festival and the Gloucester County Tomato Expo, both of which will provide exhibits, tasting, and contest throughout the four days.

On Thursday, horse, and swine shows will be followed by the naming of the Gloucester County 4-H Ambassador Team and a performance by the Pitman Hobo Band at 8 p.m. Friday's events will include sheep, rabbit, and small animal shows, a Western Horse show, a livestock auction, and the Miss Peach Pageant.

Children can also enjoy a magic show and compete in a Kiddie Tractor Pull. The Gangi dancers performance will be followed by country dance lessons.

Saturday is "Kids Day."

Activities for kids start with a diaper derby and baby parade followed by turtle races and a frog jumping contest. On stage, Sci Fi Robot will present a children's program and 4-H Leader John Means will present a Rock 'N Reptile Show. The entire family can enjoy an English Horse Show and a Draft Horse Pull and on stage, the Gloucester City Old Time String Band.

Sunday will feature a Mini Horse Show, a dairy goat show, and a dog show. It will also include something new, a pig roast.

Prize 4-H market lambs and hogs will be auctioned off Friday evening, July 24, at 7.30 p.m. at the 4-H Fair.

Arrangements will be made to have your purchased animal taken to the slaughter house and packaged for your freezer, roasts, chops, bacon, even scrap-ple. The 4-H members who raise these animals use the money to purchase new animals for next year. Many set aside any profit they receive toward their future educational goals.

Is your preference chicken, seafood, or pork? On Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 4 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. a special food will be the feature for dinner. On Thursday, you will choose from steamed clams, clams on the half shell, shrimp or barbecue ribs or all of them. Each item is priced separately. Fresh picked sweet corn, rolls, and ice tea will complete this ala carte menu.

On Friday and Saturday, enjoy 4-H's delicious chicken barbecue dinner. This includes sweet corn, fresh Jersey tomatoes, rolls, iced tea and potato chips. On Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. there will be a pig roast.

At 6 p.m. on Friday, Miss Peach for 1998 will take the crown and the Governor's trophy will be presented for the finest quality peaches.

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