

# Pennsylvania 'Simply Delicious' Sweet Corn Is On Schedule

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — "Good supplies of the better early season varieties of sweet corn are coming on the market now," reports Fred Funk, Lancaster County vegetable grower and vice chairman of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program. "We started pulling our first corn grown under low tunnels the middle of June and our full-season varieties by the end of June," he added. That is about right on schedule for Lancaster County.

The beginning of the sweet corn harvest also coincides with the debut of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's million dollar "Simply Delicious" Produce Promotion campaign. In mid-June, Governor Mark Schweiker and Secretary of Agriculture Samuel Hayes introduced the campaign's first ever television commercial that will air over 2,000 times this summer. The 30-second commercial features Pennsylvania's number one vegetable crop, sweet corn.

Most growers expect to begin harvesting sweet corn grown without plastic mulch about the second week of July. Some areas of the state have experienced a challenging spring with abundant rainfall interrupting planned planting schedules. Still, at this point, the outlook is promising for a good supply throughout the summer this year.

The first corn to be harvested is that grown under clear plastic covers placed over the rows of corn. The clear plastic acts as a miniature greenhouse, trapping the heat from the sun and conserving soil moisture. This warm moist environment is ideal for rapid seed germination and seedling development in cool April days. Planting under the plastic mulch represents a greater investment for the grower in terms of time, equipment and supplies but enables the grower to hit the early market.

In the southeastern part and south central of the state which is



See this fellow advertising Pennsylvania Simply Delicious sweet corn on television.

still experiencing drought conditions, Funk reports that more and more growers are using trickle irrigation for their sweet corn. With this method of irrigation, a plastic tube with tiny emitters is laid down between every other row of corn. Water, and oftentimes, fertilizer, is pumped into the tubes and trickles out to the roots of the sweet corn crop. It is the most water-efficient method of irrigation available.

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 percent 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 also grow some yellow varieties.

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 23,000 acres grown annually. Ninety percent of this sweet corn acreage is grown for fresh market sales. As a result, Pennsylvania ranks as the seventh largest fresh-market sweet corn producing state in the nation. Fresh corn will be available from July into October. About 2,300 acres of the sweet corn acreage are grown to be processed into frozen, dried or canned corn products available year around.

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 about five 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.

Noted Lancaster County cook-

book author Betty Groff says, "Corn is the most versatile and easy to prepare of all Pennsylvania vegetables." Following are some of Mrs. Groff's sweet corn recipes from her cookbooks:

**CORN 'N SALMON SKILLET**  
2 cups cucumbers, thinly sliced  
4 ounces onion, chopped  
1 teaspoon dill weed  
1½ cup canned salmon, drained and flaked  
2 cups creamed corn  
1 cup plain unflavored yogurt, divided in half  
Spray vegetable oil in a medium nonstick skillet and cook cucumber, onion and dill weed till clear, approximately five minutes. Stir in salmon, corn and half of the yogurt. Cook over low heat, stirring until mixture is hot but not boiling. Spoon mixture into a heated serving dish and top with remaining yogurt and a dash of paprika. Serves 4.

**CORN AND CLAM CHOWDER**  
1 tablespoon butter  
1 small onion, sliced thin  
12 large fresh clams or 2 cups chopped clams, plus 2 cups clam broth  
8 cups fresh or frozen white or yellow corn kernels  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley  
4 cups milk  
½ cup evaporated milk  
Melt the butter in a heavy four-quart pot, add the onion, and saute until soft. When using fresh clams, chop them, and reserve the clam juice separately. There should be 2 cups of liquid. When using canned clams, drain them and add enough bottled clam broth to make up the 2 cups. Add the clam liquid, the chopped clams, corn kernels, salt, pepper, and parsley to the onion and bring to a boil. Stir in the milk and evaporated milk. Reduce the heat and simmer for approximately 30 minutes, stirring often to prevent the milk from sticking. The longer the soup simmers, the thicker it becomes and the better it tastes.

Variation: For a really thick chowder, add two potatoes, peeled and sliced.

Microwave: Melt butter in a covered four-quart glass pot and add the onion. Follow the above

recipe and bring to boil — about eight minutes. Stir in milk and cook about seven minutes. Stir in clams and let stand for three minutes before serving.

Serves 6.

## SAUSAGE, CORN AND PEPPERS

1½-2 pounds sausage  
3 cups corn kernels  
3 medium red or green bell peppers, diced  
1 teaspoon salt  
Freshly ground pepper to taste  
Sprig fresh rosemary, chopped fine

Form sausage into bite-size balls. Fry in wok or heavy skillet until golden brown — approximately eight minutes. Remove all but 2 tablespoons fat, then add corn, peppers, salt, and pepper, and rosemary. Stir-fry until peppers are tender — approximately five minutes — covering pan with lid for the last three minutes.

Serves 4-6.

The following corn recipe is from Belinda Myers of Daltown who won first prize in the Lebanon Area Fair 2002 "Simply Delicious" Vegetable Quick Bread Contest:

## KORNY KORN BREAD

1¼ cup milk  
½ cup melted butter  
2 eggs  
1 cup flour  
1 cup corn meal  
2 tablespoons sugar  
4 teaspoons baking powder  
½ teaspoon salt  
1¼ cup grated fresh sweet corn  
2 tablespoons finely diced red pepper  
½ cup shredded Cheddar cheese  
2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese  
¼ teaspoon minced garlic  
½ teaspoon dried basil  
¼ teaspoon ground pepper  
Blend milk, butter and eggs in a large mixing bowl. Add flour, corn meal, sugar, baking powder, salt, sweet corn, red pepper, garlic, basil and ground pepper. Blend well. Fold in cheeses last. Place in a nine-inch loaf pan which has been greased. Bake at 350 degrees for 50 to 60 minutes or until the center comes clean.



## Granddaddy Craft Event Has New Twists

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — The oldest craft fair in Pennsylvania, the 56th Annual State Craft Fair, will be offering 15 unique craft seminars free to the public, July 26, 27, 28 from 11 a.m. at the Franklin and Marshall College Sports and Fitness Center in Lancaster.

These 15 unique seminars are designed to offer both novices and experts a small group atmosphere where enthusiasts can discuss, one-on-one, craft techniques, theories and history with professionals in their field.

Seminars include the following:

- Construction of a Garment, learn about fabric design, patterning and details for "real" women's clothes.
- Faceting Gemstones, what makes a stone sparkle?
- Slip Trailing in Clay, learn how to band pieces with colored slips and intricate trailed designs.
- Cold Joinery Techniques in Jewelry, learn about wire work as a jewelry medium.

- Sustainable Forestry, discover why protecting the environment and managing the resources is important to craftspeople, collectors and the world at large.

- From Fiber to Fabric, learn how fiber turns into fabric through spinning and weaving techniques.

- Construction of a Leather Handbag, from raw material to an incredible piece of usable art.

- Decorating Techniques in Clay, a mind-opening discussion about the myriad of techniques available.

- Materials, an open discussion on where ideas come from and how to look at the world's natural materials as an inspirational art supply store.

- History and Techniques of Raku Pottery, a time-honored Japanese technique where techniques and secrets of creating metallic lusters will be discussed.

- Difference Between Handcrafted and Manufactured Wind-

sor Chairs, learn the aspects of quality, construction and materials that separate handcrafted pieces from manufactured.

- Brass and Copper: What's the Difference?, learn about these metals, their history.

- Spinning Natural Fiber, spinning natural fibers to create designs that are classic pieces of art-to-wear.

- Reverse Painting on Glass, learn the age old Oriental technique that is experiencing a resurgence in calculability.

- Clay: A Brief History of the Wheel, learn about the geology and history of clay and how many civilizations have used this treasure of the earth.

With admission to the 56th State Craft Fair, all seminars are free and prior registration is not necessary. Seminars are open to adults as well as children. Discount admission coupons are available at [www.pennsylvania-crafts.com](http://www.pennsylvania-crafts.com).

## Kutztown Plans Sweet Corn Meeting

KUTZTOWN (Berks Co.) — The Kutztown Produce Auction Education Committee and Penn State Cooperative Extension will conduct their annual sweet corn meeting at the Kutztown Produce Auction Wednesday, July 31, from 3:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Numerous educational sessions as well as an all-you-can-eat sweet corn dinner will keep the evening full of activity.

Sessions include, Home Well Water Issues, Farm Tractor Safety, Municipal Zoning, Enterprise Budgeting, Ecological Sweet Corn Practices and Vegetable Disease Control. Three vegetable category (03) pesticide update credits will be given.

This event is being co-sponsored by Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit, Moyer and Son, Inc., Base Organics and Penns Creek MFG.

Preregistration is requested. Registration fee is \$5 and should be mailed to: Sweet Corn Meeting, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Berks County Ag Center, P.O. Box 520, Leesport, PA

19533-0520. Laura McNutt at (610) 378-1327 can be contacted for more information.

## Buying Tips For 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.