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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

August 2019

CORN:

**The Canadian Method for Cooking
Corn-on-the-Cob**

Chilled Corn and Tomato Creamed Soup

Corn and Blueberry Salad

Couscous with Gold Vegetables

Scalloped Butter-Sautéed Corn

Piperno and Flannery (2001) carbon-dated archaeological specimens found in the highlands of Mexico to about 4,000 BC, proving that the process of creamed the corn upon which we depend today from the wild grass *teosinte* was well



teosinte and a primitive corn ear

under way. Further molecular dating by Matsoka *et al* (2002) suggests a date of origin of about 9,000 years ago. The difference between these closely related species is only about five genes but an ear of *teosinte*, a close relative of rice, evolved from gamagrass, still cultivated for animal feed.



gamagrass

Yes, my field is genetics and you may not have the same passion for the historical message that genetics delivers but I do want to share with you part of the story of the origin of a grass crop that changed the world and began its remarkable journey in this hemisphere. It is estimated that twenty-one percent of human nutrition globally is provided by corn.

Corn, unlike so many of the foods that began their global journey from the western hemisphere, did not grow wild. Its sudden appearance in the archaeological record was eventually attributed to breeding techniques, however primitive, practiced by the native peoples of Mesoamerica beginning prior to 6,000 years ago. Selection of the best kernels at harvest to be used as seed for next year's crop was a simple, effective form of crop modification. Genetic modification through selection for leaf number and size, cob size, and kernel size, number, and taste gradually changed corn. A corn sample drilled 200 feet below Mexico City revealed corn cobs that support this timeline since it included corn cobs that we would recognize today, albeit more like the small ear picture above. During the first millennium AD a sustainable crop was being grown by the Pueblo people in the arid Southwest of our country. Selection of kernels from plants that prospered in the soil conditions and within the rainfall limitations into which these people were now settling allowed for the sustainable crop.

Corn is a good food, high in grain amino acids and low in fat until we slather it with butter. Locally grown green (fresh) corn is available throughout the summer but frozen corn is a convenience of which we can avail ourselves throughout the year. We are now fortunate that organic frozen corn is available in most well-stocked grocery stores. No more trying to find the right farm supply at the farmer's market or having to pay premium prices at a natural food store or having to freeze your own winter supply. Corn can be added to so many casseroles and skillet meals and soups. Have you ever eaten corn raw right off the cob? It is an amazingly new experience the first time you taste it that way; you may well prefer it. Corn really ranks up there with bread as a "staff of life." Remember cornbread and corn muffins when you are planning your menus. Organic corn meal is also stocked by grocery stores and natural food stores today.

We are still mucking with the genes of *Zea mays* but I thought you might appreciate knowing what has been confirmed to date about the origin of this important grass.



THE CANADIAN METHOD FOR COOKING CORN – ON – THE – COB

TPT -10 minutes

Most Americans think of Canada as a northern extension of our own culture and Canadians as being just like we are. We are, after all, technically all Americans. To some extent this is very true; we share languages and heritages, a colonial history, strong feelings about our representative democratic governments, a "melting pot" mentality, preferences for the same agricultural products, dollars which flowed back and forth across the border for many years without exchange differences and vending machines which took either currency, technology-fired economies, passionate environmentalists, respect for individualism, "For Better and For Worse," the jet stream, the gulf stream, the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and the longest open, undefended, and friendly border in the world. One does not grow up along the United States/Canadian border without absorbing and adapting Canadian ideas, so much so that it is not until later in life that the realization comes that you are truly an amalgam.

This recipe is a case in point. All my adult life I have cooked fresh corn this way, with explanations, of one thing and another, to those who inquired as to why I add milk and sugar to my cooking water. This Canadian method is said, by some, to be "The Saskatchewan Method." Even when cooking the freshest, sweetest corn, directly from the field, I, out of habit surely, add milk and sugar, if I choose to cook corn rather than eating it raw. We offer it here nostalgically. We do not know if it is a better way to cook corn but it is the way we cook corn and we probably will never change . . .

**4 ears *freshly-picked* corn—shucked (or husked), rinsed,
all silks removed, and broken in half**

4 quarts *boiling* water

**1 tablespoon sugar
1/4 cup *one-percent* milk**

Butter

Using a sharp knife, cut tips and stems from each ear of corn. Set aside.

Place kettle of *boiling* water over *HIGH* heat. Add sugar and milk. Allow water to return to the boil.

Add corn and *cook only until water again returns to the boil*—about 3-5 minutes.

Serve at once, with butter.

Yields 8 corn ear halves

Note: Of course, this recipe may be halved or doubled, when required. When doubling, remember to allow the cooking water to return to the boil before adding additional corn ears.

1/4 SERVING (i. e., 2 halves exclusive of butter) –
PROTEIN = 4.8 g.; FAT = 1.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 30.5 g.;
CALORIES = 132; CALORIES FROM FAT = 10%

CHILLED CORN AND TOMATO CREAMED SOUP

TPT - 2 hours and 45 minutes;
2 hours = refrigeration period

Fresh and rich need not be mutually exclusive food sensations. I encountered a Chilean soup similar to this, albeit much spicier. [See p. 532 of volume I of “A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America’s Immigrant Soul.”] It is delicious but not to everyone’s taste. This protein-packed summer soup, which is popular on Long Island’s East End, uses the best of the summer for a fresh, rich taste. If containers of the puréed base are stowed away in the freezer at the peak of season, I have dinner with practically no fuss at all.



**3 1/2 cups vegetarian stock of choice
3 cups green (fresh) or frozen corn kernels
1 1/2 cups peeled, seeded, and chopped tomatoes*
1 medium onion—chopped
1 bay leaf—broken
Pinch sugar**

**1/8 teaspoon chili powder, or to taste
Freshly ground *white* pepper, to taste**

1/4 cup light cream or half and half**

Sprigs of fresh parsley, for garnish, if desired

In a kettle, with cover, set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine stock, corn, chopped tomatoes and onion, bay leaf, and sugar. Allow to come to the boil, stirring frequently. Reduce heat to *LOW*. Simmer, partially covered, for 30 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove and discard bay leaf pieces.

Using the electric blender or the food processor fitted with steel knife, purée cooked mixture until very smooth. Season with chili powder and *white* pepper to taste. Strain through a fine sieve into a mixing bowl.***

Stir in cream. Chill for at least 2 hours in the refrigerator to allow flavors to marry.

Turn into a *chilled* soup tureen and serve into *chilled* soup cups or bowls. Garnish with a sprig of parsley or a dash of chili powder, as preferred, before serving.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4-6 people

Notes: *Although canned tomatoes may be used in this recipe, fresh, vine-ripened tomatoes are preferred.

**If a lighter taste is desired, whole milk may be substituted.

***The puréed soup base may be frozen at this point, if necessary.

This recipe may be halved or doubled, when required.

Refrigerated leftovers keep well for several days.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 6.0 g.; FAT = 2.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 34.9 g.;
CALORIES = 147; CALORIES FROM FAT = 15%

CORN AND BLUEBERRY SALAD

TPT - 13 minutes

This simple, quickly-prepared salad is one of the most beautiful in my collection. The combination of corn and blueberries is an unexpectedly perfect moment that jogs the creative spirit. I serve it on a white, leaf-shaped dish to capitalize on the mood in creates. Green corn is only available from about the Fourth of July to mid-September, even in farm country. In the winter, when local blueberries, corn fresh from the field, and flower garnishes are unavailable, the combination of corn, blueberries, and cucumber is a different salad to enjoy.

2 ears green (fresh) corn—shucked, silk removed, well-washed, and dried or defrosted, frozen corn kernels, when necessary*

1/2 cup fresh blueberries—well-washed and well-dried
2 tablespoons finely chopped Italian red onion

1/2 medium cucumber—peeled

2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander (*cilantro*) leaves
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 tablespoon safflower or sunflower oil
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice
1 1/2 teaspoons honey
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin

Home-grown, spray-free Borage flowers, if available
—well-washed and well-dried—for garnish

Using a sharp knife, cut the kernels from each ear of corn. Put into a mixing bowl.



Add blueberries and *finely* chopped red onion.

Slice the cucumber in half lengthwise and then slice each half in half again lengthwise. Slice each quartered section of the cucumber into slices. Add to salad mixture.

Add chopped, fresh coriander (*cilantro*) and black pepper. Toss gently.

In a cruet, combine oil, lime juice, honey, and ground cumin. Shake to blend well. Pour over vegetables. Toss. Turn into a chilled serving dish.

Garnish with *Borage* flowers.

Serve at once.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Note: *A piece of paper toweling rubbed up and down the ear removes silk most efficiently.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.



1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.7 g.; FAT = 4.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 22.8 g.;
CALORIES = 132; CALORIES FROM FAT = 28%

COUSCOUS WITH GOLDEN VEGETABLES

TPT - 20 minutes

Inspired by the tastes of the Middle East, the addition of sweet corn kernels makes this couscous a very American adaptation. As a side dish, it is an admirable compliment to eggs, “fishless fish,” or grilled entrees such as eggplant. If there are leftovers, I frequently add crumbled soy bacon and chopped cilantro when reheating; it seems like a wholly different dish.

3/4 cup vegetarian stock*

1/3 cup dry, quick-cooking, whole wheat *couscous***

1 1/2 teaspoons *extra virgin* olive oil

1/2 cup *finely* chopped onion

1/2 cup diced *yellow* sweet pepper

**1/2 cup *yellow* corn kernels—freshly cut from cob *or*
frozen and *defrosted***

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

Pinch salt

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

2 teaspoons butter

In a saucepan set over *HIGH* heat, bring stock to the boil. Reduce heat to *LOW* and stir in *couscous*. Cover tightly and allow to cook for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and allow *couscous* to steam for about 10 minutes. *All water should be absorbed.*

While *couscous* is steaming, in a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. Sauté *finely* chopped onion until onion is soft and translucent, *being careful not to allow the onion to brown.*

Add diced yellow pepper and corn. Continue to sauté for 2 or 3 minutes until peppers just begin to soften. Stir in ground turmeric and cumin, salt, and black pepper. Continue to sauté for about 1 minute to allow flavors to be released. Remove from heat and set aside.

When *couscous* is steamed and *all water has been absorbed*, add butter. Fluff cooked *couscous* with a wooden fork until butter is melted and integrated. Fold in sautéed onion-pepper-corn mixture. Turn into a warmed serving bowl. Fluff again and serve.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: *A white stock will not discolor this dish. Other vegetable stocks, especially those which contain tomatoes, are not suitable.

***Couscous* is packaged by several companies and is now generally available in grocery stores, online, and food specialty stores as well as in Middle Eastern groceries. Organic whole wheat *couscous* is a staple for most natural food stores.



Yellow beets can be added if you have the good fortune to find some in your market or at your farm stand.

This recipe may be halved or doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.6 g.; FAT = 3.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 22.0 g.;
CALORIES = 129; CALORIES FROM FAT = 27%

SCALLOPED BUTTER–SAUTÉED CORN

TPT - 30 minutes

Bread has been an important food to human beings from the day that they first learned how to bake or fry a grain flour and water mixture. Egyptian tomb paintings dating from 25 BC attest to the use of ovens for bread baking made from mixed wheat and barley flours; in the third century AD a Greek author Athenaeus delineated some seventy-two distinct types of bread. Every culture has a way of using day-old, dry, or even stale bread. That fresh loaf you bake or you pick up at the bakery in the morning, if not consumed during the course of the day, will be toast tomorrow and then it might become a bread pudding or a cheese strata. Now we are talking about baked loaves not grocery store breads that contain additives to extend shelf life. I remember thinking how can a bread nourish us if it cannot support a mold colony. My dearest friend and I were both teaching freshman college biology and our preferred way to collect bread mold specimens for lab investigation was to slide a couple of slices of bread under our beds until the black mycelium spread across the bread slice. On several occasions the mold never developed; we changed bread sources. Breadcrumbs are the final act for my bread. I dry any leftover bread and use my food processor to produce fine breadcrumbs which are then bagged and frozen. Before I had a food processor, I put the dried bread in a heavy plastic bag and rolled it with a rolling pin as my grandmother and great-grandmother had done using a flour sack to contain the crumbs. The breadcrumbs can be used plain or seasoned as in this dish. All the hype to the contrary, there is really no need to buy packaged breadcrumbs.

1/2 cup dry breadcrumbs

1 1/2 tablespoons grated pecorino Romano cheese

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 1/2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon butter

1 1/2 cups green (fresh) or frozen corn kernels

In a small skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine breadcrumbs, grated cheese, and black pepper. Stir to combine.

Add the 1 1/2 tablespoons butter. Allow butter to melt. Stir well to distribute the butter. Cook until crumbs are evenly browned. Remove from heat. Set aside until required.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

In another small skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, melt the 1 tablespoonful butter. Add corn. Cook, stirring frequently, until corn is heated through. Turn into a **5-inch soufflé dish**. Spoon prepared breadcrumbs evenly over the top. Bake in preheated 325-degree oven until heated through and breadcrumbs just begin to brown.

Serve at once.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2-3 people

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 5.8 g.; FAT = 8.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 34.5 g.;
CALORIES = 223; CALORIES FROM FAT = 35%



*Since we include corn in so many dishes,
the temptation to make this column a “two-parter” was irresistible
so I decided that next month we might consider some recipes
that make delicious use of corn meal.
I do hope you can find the time to drop by,*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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