

CORN



Corn (Maize), along with many other traditional plants like beans, squash, melons, tobacco, and roots, is a domesticated plant of the Americas. These indigenous plants are significant to Nebraska tribes. They have been used for thousands of years, provide nutritional benefits, and are used ceremonially. Crops developed by Native Americans were adopted by European colonists in America and quickly spread to other parts of the world. One of the oldest varieties is Indian corn, different in color and taste than sweet corn. Indian corn is also known as flint corn and has the texture of hominy when eaten in soups. Indian corn has a mixture of beautiful red, blue, black, and white kernels. In ancient native communities, it has been used for meals, ceremonies, and nutrition. While there are many varieties, calico-patterned or speckled varieties of Indian corn result from cross-pollination of single-shaded plants.

The Three Sisters

Corn, beans, and squash are planted together to protect and nourish each other.

SELECTION, STORAGE & COOKING

- Look for corn husks that are bright green and fresh.
- Avoid husks that appear dry or peeling away from the cob. Give the cob a squeeze; pick ones with the least amount of air gap between the husks and the kernels. It is preferable for them to be tightly packed.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Corn is a staple in cuisines all around the world. While plenty of people enjoy corn, many don't realize that it's actually a very nutritious option that tribes have used for centuries. Corn provides thiamin and other vitamins and minerals. This budget-friendly and easy-to-find grain is also a good source of carbohydrates and is higher in protein than you might expect. Corn is naturally low in fat, with 1.4 grams per medium-sized ear. Corn offers several health benefits beyond its vitamin and mineral content. Depending on the color, corn is rich in a variety of antioxidants and beneficial plant compounds that protect against disease.

SEASONAL AVAILABILITY



MEXICAN STREET CORN CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

- 32 oz frozen or fresh corn (thawed)
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 1/2 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp cayenne optional
- 5 oz queso fresco

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Pour the corn into a large casserole dish. Mix in the mayo, sour cream, chili powder, garlic powder, salt, and half of the queso fresco until combined.
3. Bake for 30-40 minutes or until heated through and the sides begin to bubble.
4. Sprinkle the remaining queso fresco over the casserole and top with chopped cilantro. Enjoy!

LEARN MORE ABOUT NEBRASKA HARVEST OF THE MONTH

www.education.ne.gov/ns/farm-to-school/harvest-of-the-month

DRYING CORN ACTIVITY

HISTORY BEHIND DRYING CORN

There were few universal preservation practices, but drying food was an option available to almost all tribes. Drying corn also had the advantage of making the harvest easier to store and transport. Drying not only concentrated nutrients, but the resulting product also weighed less because so much water was lost in the process. Some foods like beans could dry naturally on the vine, but other foods like corn, berries, and mushrooms were usually gathered first and then dried. Sun-drying was one way to preserve all types of food.

Tribes dried corn in a variety of methods using the sun. Some let the corn dry on its stalks, or picked ears and let them dry on mats in the sun. Drying was essential because the loss of moisture made it harder for microorganisms and enzymes that spoil food to grow. Later, the maize would be stored in underground pits lined with grass to prevent mildew and spoilage.



ACTIVITY

1. Select tender, mature ears. Blanch the ears for 4 to 5 minutes in boiling water or 5 to 6 minutes in steam.
2. Cool ears in cold water only long enough to stop the cooking action. Drain well.
3. Cut the kernels from the cob to $\frac{3}{4}$ of their depth. Do not scrape.
4. Place in a single layer on mesh-covered dehydrator trays. The heat left in the corn from blanching will cause the drying process to start more quickly. Corn kernels become very small when dried and will fall through regular trays.
5. Dry at 150°F for 1 to 2 hours and then reduce temperature to 130°F. It will take 6 to 10 hours to dry.
6. The corn dries more quickly near the end of the drying time. Check closely at the end of the drying time to avoid scorching. Corn is sufficiently dry when it is crunchy and crisp.
7. Store in an airtight container or jar in a dark, cool place.

LEARN TO SAY "CORN" IN DIFFERENT TRIBAL LANGUAGES

DAKOTA
Wamnaheza

UMONHO^N
Wa' haba

PONCA
Wa' haba

HOCHUNK
Wicąwas

LAKOTA
Wagméza

