

Sweet corn is almost synonymous with late summertime picnics and eating. And I think the local corn season for 2005 has arrived! I've spotted a few trucks around town selling freshly picked sweet corn and it was announced it would be at the local Farmer's Market this weekend.

Sweet corn has taken a beating with the recent low carbohydrate craze! However, take heart lowans because sweet corn does offer nutritional value. It has more than 25% of the daily recommendation for folic acid and also offers small amounts of vitamin C, magnesium, phosphorus and thiamin. Both frozen corn and canned corn offer the same nutrition of fresh sweet corn (although the sodium intake is higher with canned corn).

Don't let me forget to mention that corn is a good source of fiber! Nine out of ten Americans do not meet the daily recommendations for fiber intake (25-35 g per day). A meta-analysis of 330,000 subjects found that "for every 10g of fiber eaten per day, there was a 14% decrease in risk for coronary heart disease events (such as heart attacks or stroke) and a 27% decreased risk for dying from hear disease." So fiber is indeed important for our health! Other great sources of fiber include dried beans, peas and lentils, oat bran and wheat cereals, nuts and seeds, popcorn, peas, pear with skin, potato with skin, berries, spinach, barley, apricot, apple, banana, broccoli, whole grains and dried fruits. Eating a high fiber diet helps with constipation, lowering cholesterol, cancer prevention, diabetes control and weight management.

If you are looking for more ways to benefit your health by adding fiber to your eating, stop and see me in the Nutrition Clinic. Call 294-9625 or respond to this e-mail to set up your free nutrition consultation!

Here are some tips on cooking sweet corn and preparing corn. Enjoy since yummy fresh sweet corn only comes around once a year!!

Traditional Method- Corn on the Cob

Just before cooking, husk the corn, pull off the silky threads, and cut out any blemishes. Drop the corn into a large pot filled with boiling water. Cover the pot and let the water return to a boil again, then turn off heat and keep pot covered for 10 minutes. Drain and serve.

Microwave Corn on the Cob

Pull down husks to remove silk. Rinse. Pull husks back up to cover corn tightly. Cook on HIGH setting for about 3 minutes. Check for doneness by piercing a kernel with a fork. Microwave longer if necessary. Remove husks and enjoy!

OR Husk corn and wrap ears in paper towel, wax paper or plastic wrap. Cook on HIGH for 3 minutes or longer (depends on number of ears being cooked).

What's a healthy spread for your corn? Choose a **trans-fat free** tub margarine such as Promise, Fleishmann's, I Can't Believe It's Not Butter or Smart Balance. (Most of these come in a light version if you are watching calories!) Try a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime juice. Try using only light salt and pepper or try one of the 12 fabulous Mrs. Dash blends for unique and diverse flavors. Some people use chili powder in place of salt and pepper on their corn.

Grilled Corn on the Cob

8 ears of corn in husks (outer layer of husks can be discarded)

Peel husks back carefully and remove corn silk and discard it.

Fold husks back into place and tie around ear with strips of outer husks or kitchen string.

In large bowls or buckets, soak corn with cold water for 10-20 minutes.

Drain corn and grill on rack 5 to 6 inches over heat source for 15-25 minutes, turning occasionally. Cook until corn is tender. If husks are too hot to handle, let them cool before removing them from corn.

Corn and Tomato Salsa

1 cup fresh corn kernels (or use frozen or canned if fresh is not available)
1 large tomato, seeded and chopped
2/3 cup chopped red onion
1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1/2 to 1 jalapeno chili, seeded and minced
1 avocado, pitted, peeled and chopped

Mix all ingredients together in large bowl. Cover and chill before serving. Tasty with baked tortilla chips, pita wedges or whole grain crackers.

Corn and Black Bean Salad (Serves 6)

3 cups fresh corn (or use frozen or canned if fresh is not available)
1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
1 and 1/2 cup fresh tomatoes, seeded and diced (off season use a can of diced tomatoes)
1 cup minced red onion
1 red or green pepper, chopped
1 Tbsp. lime juice
4 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro
2 Tbsp. rice or cider vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste (for additional flavor add 1 tsp. each chili powder and cumin)

Combine corn, beans, tomatoes, onion, pepper and cilantro in bowl. Mix remaining ingredients and pour over corn mixture. Let sit for at least 30 minutes at room temperature to allow the flavors to develop. Check seasoning and adjust as desired.

Per serving= 193 calories, 5 g fat, less than 1 g sat fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 220 mg sodium, 7 g fiber, 7 g protein.

Freezing Corn on the Cob

Husk ears, remove silk and rinse. Sort sizes. Blanch in boiling water. Boil small ears 7 minutes, medium ears for 9 minutes and large ears for 11 minutes. Cool immediately and drain well. Remove corn from ears or spread ears on a tray. Freeze packed in containers or wrap in moisture-resistant material. Now you can enjoy that fresh corn taste throughout the year!

One medium ear will yield approximately 1/2 cup of kernels.
Four medium ears will yield equivalent of 10-ounce package of frozen corn.

Stay cool, eat healthy and enjoy eating!

Sally

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