

## Farmer in the Field



# SUMMERS SWEET, SWEET CORN

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Doesn't it feel like June just screams summer? Most kids are out of school, vacations have been planned and the thought of all the fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables are intoxicating. If you had to name three of your favorite fruits and vegetables that signify summer what would they be? I bet corn is one of them. Summer barbeques wouldn't be the same without sweet mouthwatering corn on the cob. It's an America staple just like tomatoes, watermelon and apple pie.

The first sweet corn was grown by Native Americans and was a spontaneous mutation of field corn. This is recessive mutation that results naturally in the genes converting sugar to starch inside the endosperm of the corn kernel. In 1779 the Iroquois Native Americans gave the sweet corn, known as "Papoon", to the European settlers and it soon became a favorite food in the southern and central regions of the United States. I guess it doesn't get any more American than that. Spanish explorers then introduced sweet corn to the rest of the world.

I've always loved sweet corn and am a firm believer if you get an ear with a worm you've got a good one. Why wouldn't the worm go for a sweetest ear? I tested this theory with husband, a nonbeliever, and I won. When buying sweet corn stay away from the grocery store and buy from the farmer if you can. The best tasting corn should not be any older than 24 hour old. Husks should be vibrant green and never dry. If it's not our own corn I like to use the thumbnail test. Pull the husk back slightly and add pressure to a kernel. If the juices spray out it's a good sign of a young and juicy ear.

Did you know an ear of corn is only about 69 calories? About the same as an apple with less than one-fourth the sugar? And cooked corn is healthier than raw? Cooking increases the antioxidant activity

which helps protect the body from cancer and heart disease. What's not healthy for you are the toppings that have become so hugely popular. I used to use butter but gave that up when I married the farmer who grows the corn. There is nothing better than picking corn on the way home and eating it for dinner that night, sans anything.

Local California corn starts in Brentwood where it's hotter and works its way down through Gilroy and Hollister. We still get the ocean "air conditioning" and cool mornings which slows the growing process. Brentwood's just hot! I should know that is where I grew up.