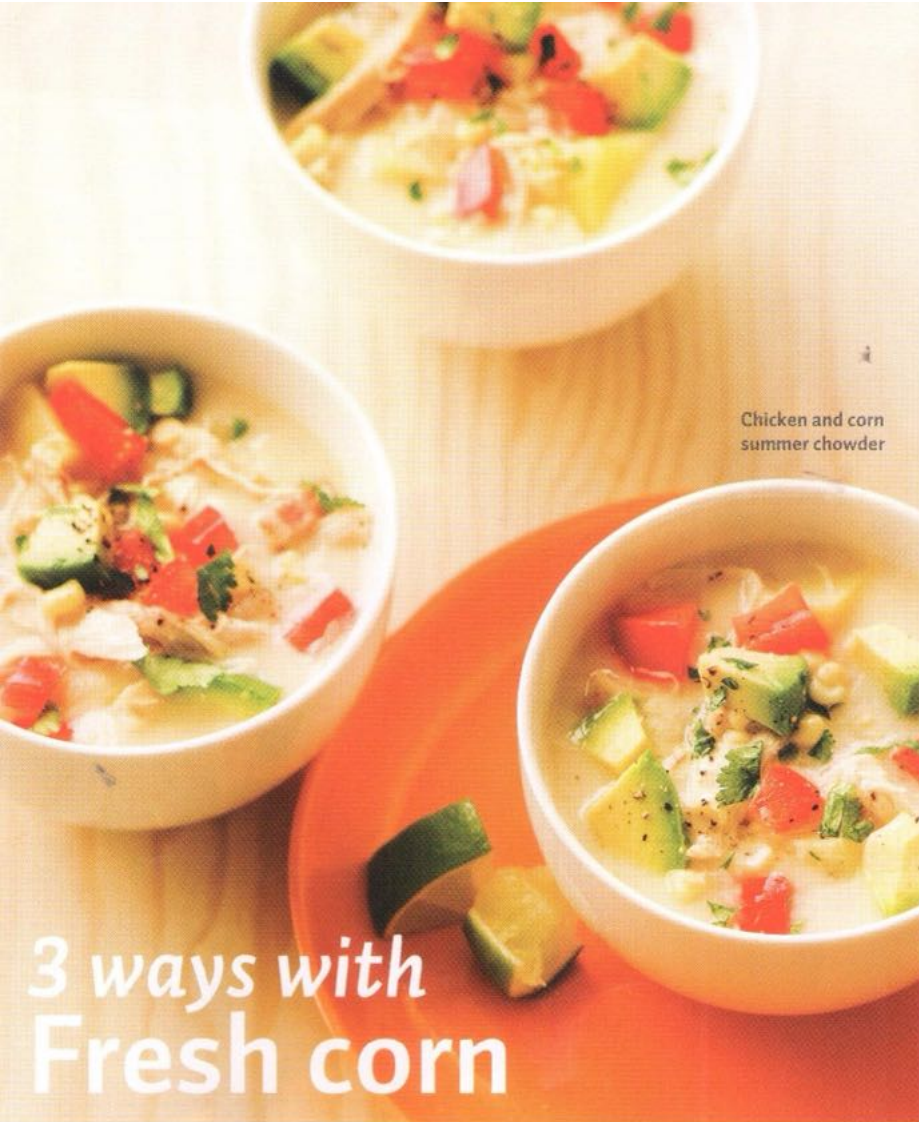




Chicken and corn summer chowder

3 ways with Fresh corn

Summer's sweetest vegetable shows off its charms; plus we give some tips on the simplest ways to prepare it

BY MOLLY WATSON PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEO GONG FOOD STYLING BY RANDY MON

AS A KID, I would gorge myself on freshly husked and boiled sweet corn during its brief season every August—sometimes eating half a dozen ears for dinner and nothing else.

Now, thanks to dozens of different hybrids created to ripen throughout the summer, we can have more corn more often. So after that first rush of eating the tender ears simply buttered and salted, what else can you do with them? Grill them as well as boil them, of course (we are in the West, after all). Beyond that, we've developed some seriously delicious ways to keep corn on the table and everyone glad to see it there.

Chicken and corn summer chowder

Both rich and light, this one-pot meal has a fresh, bright topping of avocado, tomato, cilantro, and lime.

PREP AND COOK TIME 50 minutes

MAKES 6 servings

2 slices bacon, chopped

1 onion, chopped

3 tbsp. flour

1 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and chopped

6 cups reduced-sodium or homemade chicken broth

4 cups shredded cooked chicken (from a 2½- to 3-lb. roasted chicken)

Kernels cut from 3 ears corn (about 3 cups)

¼ to ½ cup heavy whipping cream

2 medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped

1 avocado, pitted, peeled, and chopped

1 cup loosely packed cilantro leaves

2 limes, cut into wedges

Freshly ground black pepper

1. In a large, heavy pot over medium-high heat, cook bacon until fat renders and meat starts to brown. Add onion, reduce heat to medium, and cook until soft, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle with flour and cook, stirring, until flour smells cooked (you should get a whiff of baked piecrust) but hasn't started to brown, about 3 minutes.
2. Add potatoes and broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to keep mixture simmering and cook until potatoes are barely tender, about 5 minutes. Add chicken and corn and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and stir in cream to taste. Heat through, about 2 minutes. Serve in soup bowls, garnished with tomatoes, avocado, cilantro, a squirt or two of lime juice, and pepper to taste.

PER 2-CUP SERVING 504 CAL., 41% (207 CAL.) FROM FAT; 37 G PROTEIN; 23 G FAT (7.9 G SAT.); 40 G CARBO (4.8 G FIBER); 733 MG SODIUM; 109 MG CHOL.

Market salad with corn, beets, fennel, and cucumber

By tossing each ingredient separately and adding seasonings to the dressing as you go, you'll have an elegant salad with several layers of flavors (and plenty of vegetables).

PREP AND COOK TIME About 1½ hours
MAKES 6 salads

NOTES Chioggia beets, available mainly at farmers' markets, have beautiful concentric rings of red and white inside.

4 medium Chioggia (see Notes) or golden beets

4 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 tbsp. white wine vinegar

1 small garlic clove, minced or pressed

½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. dry mustard

1 fennel bulb

2 green onions (ends trimmed)

1 English cucumber

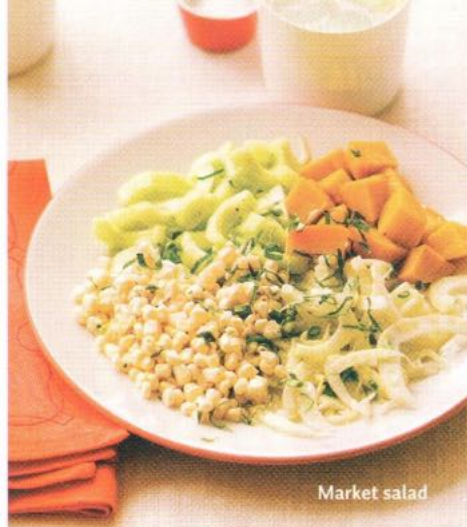
¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

4 ears corn

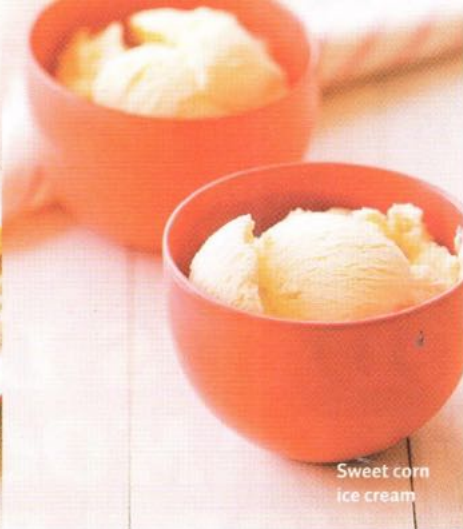
6 basil leaves, divided

Coarse-grain salt, such as fleur de sel

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Trim beets, put them on a large sheet of foil, drizzle with 1 tsp. olive oil, and wrap with foil. Roast beets until tender when pierced with a fork, about 1 hour. Unwrap and let cool.



Market salad



Sweet corn
ice cream

Buying, boiling, grilling

BEST WAY TO BUY CORN

For convenience, you may be tempted to buy husked corn wrapped in plastic. However, for optimum flavor, get corn in the husk; the covering keeps it moist and fresh, and slows down the conversion of natural sugars into starch. The longer corn is off the stalk, the less sweet it becomes, so look for ears with pliable husks, sweet-smelling tassels, and no browning on the stem—all signs of fresh-picked corn.

BEST WAY TO BOIL CORN

The easiest way to cook corn is to bring a pot of unsalted water to a boil, drop in the husked ears, cover, and turn off the burner. The heat of the water will gently cook the kernels, and the corn will stay hot for at least an hour. Serve with butter, salt, and freshly ground black pepper.

BEST WAY TO GRILL CORN

When simple boiled corn loses its appeal, try this: Pull back (without detaching) the outermost layer of each husk. Remove inner leaves and silk, then brush kernels with olive oil or melted butter and dust with chili powder. Pull up the still-attached outer husk to cover each cob, tie it shut at the top with kitchen twine or a strip of husk, and grill the ears over a medium-hot fire (you can hold your hand 5 in. above cooking grate only 5 to 7 seconds) until tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Serve with wedges of lime for squirting if you like. (Alternatively, you can husk the ears, season them, and wrap them in foil before grilling.)

2. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk together remaining 4 tbsp. olive oil, the vinegar, garlic, salt, and mustard. Set dressing aside.

3. Trim feathery greens and stalks from fennel (save for soup if you like) and slice bulb as thinly as possible. Put in bowl with dressing. Finely chop green onions and add to bowl. Toss to coat with dressing. With a slotted spoon, lift fennel-green onion mixture out of bowl (leaving excess dressing behind) and divide evenly among 6 plates, arranging the salad on one-quarter of each plate.

4. Peel, seed, and chop cucumber. Put in bowl with dressing and sprinkle with pepper. Toss to coat with dressing. Lift cucumber out of bowl (leaving excess dressing behind) and divide evenly among plates, arranging next to the fennel salad.

5. Cut kernels from corn and put in bowl with dressing. Chop 4 basil leaves and add to bowl. Toss to coat with dressing. Lift corn and basil out of bowl (leaving excess dressing behind) and divide evenly among plates, arranging next to the cucumber.

6. When beets are cool enough to handle, slip peels off, cut beets into bite-size pieces, and put in bowl with dressing. Toss with the rest of the dressing and

divide evenly among plates, arranging in the remaining quarter of each plate. Cut remaining basil leaves into thin ribbons and sprinkle over salad. Serve with coarse-grain salt, for sprinkling to taste.

PER SERVING 224 CAL., 48% (108 CAL.) FROM FAT; 5.1 G PROTEIN; 12 G FAT (1.6 G SAT.); 31 G CARBO (5 G FIBER); 273 MG SODIUM; 0 MG CHOL.

Sweet corn ice cream

Sweet corn is a favorite ice cream flavor in Mexico, where the kernels are usually stirred in whole. We've grated them to extract their sweet, milky liquid and used the kernels and liquid as part of the custard base.

PREP AND COOK TIME 40 minutes, plus chilling and freezing time

MAKES 8 servings

2 ears corn

1 cup heavy whipping cream

1½ cups milk

½ cup sugar

4 egg yolks

½ tsp. vanilla extract

1. Set a box grater in a large bowl. Using the large holes, grate corn kernels (and their "milk") off the cobs. Discard cobs.
2. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine cream, milk, and corn. Bring to a simmer. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk sugar and egg yolks until pale and thick. When cream mixture reaches a simmer, slowly ladle ½ cup of it into egg mixture, whisking constantly. Repeat with another ½-cup ladleful. Reduce heat to low, whisk warmed egg mixture into saucepan, and cook, whisking, until mixture thickens a bit, about 5 minutes.
3. Pour mixture into a medium bowl, stir in vanilla, cover with plastic wrap (letting the wrap sit directly on the mixture's surface), and chill at least 2 hours and up to 1 day.
4. Freeze in an ice cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions. Serve immediately or transfer to an airtight plastic container and freeze up to overnight.

PER ½-CUP SERVING 242 CAL., 60% (144 CAL.) FROM FAT; 4.7 G PROTEIN; 16 G FAT (8.7 G SAT.); 23 G CARBO (1 G FIBER); 43 MG SODIUM; 153 MG CHOL. ■