

Susan
Nye

Around
the Table



Confessions of a Sweet Corn Bandit

Summer 2007/volume 47

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July & August

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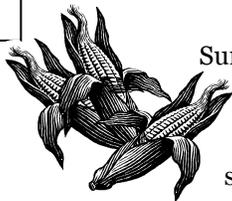
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Summer brings many wonderful treats; strawberries, blueberries and glorious red ripe tomatoes. Summer's bounty is constantly changing. We wait impatiently for each new fruit and vegetable to arrive at local farm stands and farmers' markets. But with all that summer has to offer, is there any crop more eagerly awaited than sweet corn? Corn is great in soups and chowders and salads, but the best way to eat corn is right off the cob. Want perfection? Rush a ripe ear of corn home from the farm within minutes of picking, husk it immediately and then plunge it into a pot of boiling water. Cook for exactly 4 minutes and enjoy bliss with just a little butter and salt.

Like many women, one of the worst times of my life was my early teenage years. At 13 I enjoyed all the usual angst of adolescence. I had my fair share of pimples. My unruly curls produced a never ending run of bad hair days, particularly in the summer. And, I had braces. My teeth were encased in torturous steel, wire and rubber bands. Not only painful, braces made it virtually impossible to eat corn on the cob without embarrassment. After only a few bites, kernels were deeply and obstinately lodged in every steel nook and cranny. In despair, I gave up corn on the cob for the duration.

When I moved to Switzerland I was again deprived of sweet corn. For close to 20 years I lived near Geneva; where, until fairly recently, corn on the cob was only for cows. Around the time I moved back to the US, corn on the cob was slowly starting to trickle into local markets. It was grown in southern Africa or somewhere else far away and brought in at great expense. Corn does not travel well and by the time it arrived on local shelves it was a pitiful shadow of sweet corn's true glory.

There is a lot of open farm land surrounding Geneva and bicycling through the fields was one of my favorite weekend activities. The Swiss grow cow corn in abundance. After all they need lots of corn to feed the cows to get the milk to make all that cheese and chocolate. I remember one particular Saturday when some friends and I went on a long bike ride. We rode past field after field of ripening corn.



After the ride, we joined forces and put together a potluck cookout. Preparations were well underway when some of us began to have a nagging feeling that something was missing; corn on the cob. Debate ensued; could we eat cow corn and like it? Hope sprung eternal. We decided that there might be a small window when the cow corn was ripe enough to eat but not yet tough and mealy.

And so began the great Corn Caper. We were all hardworking, law-abiding people; but we hopped back onto our bikes and went off to pilfer a farmer's field. For a minute or so I think I might have considered, "What if we were caught?" Would there be screaming headlines: "Foreigners Arrested in Agricultural Heist - Deportation Imminent"? Or maybe the farmer would skip the 911 call and just fill our backsides with buck shot.

We escaped apprehension or worst and with backpacks stuffed with ears of corn we returned to the party. We quickly husked it and threw it into boiling water. Four minutes later, the corn was still hard as a rock. Fifteen minutes later, we got fed up with waiting and gave it a try. It was edible, but tough and tasteless. Alas, we were denied that sweet taste of summer, and home. Of course there was an up side to the whole debacle. Since our caper could hardly be called successful, I was not tempted to quip my job and begin a life of crime.

Enjoy all of summer's bounty and,

Bon appétit! - Susan

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Learn & Laugh

Private Chef Services

Like to entertain?

Too busy to cook?

Let me do it for you.

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Roasted Corn & Tomato Salad

I don't think it is possible, but if you get bored with plain and simple corn on the cob, try this tomato and corn salad.

Serves 4-6

2 ears sweet corn
1/2 pint red grape tomatoes, halved
1/2 pint yellow pear tomatoes, halved
1/2 small red onion, finely chopped
1 teaspoon minced jalapeno pepper
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves
Freshly squeezed juice of 1/2 lime
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Heat grill to med-high. Remove corn husks and silk. Lightly oil the corn and place it directly on the grill. Grill the corn, turning occasionally, until the kernels are lightly browned on all sides, about 20 minutes. Remove and set aside until cool.
2. Whisk together olive oil, lime juice, jalapenos and garlic in a medium bowl. Cut the kernels off the cob; add the corn, tomatoes and onions to the bowl. Sprinkle with cilantro, season with salt and pepper and toss. Serve cold or at room temperature.