



Corn Roast!

Spark a little magic among friends with a taste of the season's finest.

By Lucie Amundsen, St. Anthony Village, Minnesota

Sweet corn brings out the kid in everyone. The earthy scent of fresh-picked ears is infused with memories of back-stoop shucking and the anticipation of a meal where you're encouraged to eat your weight in butter.

So it's really no wonder why everyone still comes running to the call, "Corn's ready!" Whether you're looking for a simple, barefoot affair or something a little more stylish, a backyard corn roast is a great way to spark magic among friends.

Before You Buy

If you haven't grown your own this year, the local farmers market or farm stand is the next best thing. That's because even more important than the variety of corn you buy is the length of time the ear's been off the stalk. "Ideally, you want to buy corn that has been picked that day," says Terry Nennich, a University of Minnesota Extension professor. "Within 48 hours, 15 to 20 percent of the corn's sugar content has dropped. That's a difference you're sure to taste."

When you're at the market, be a fussy consumer. Start by peeling the top part of the husk back to make sure that there are no soft spots and the ear is fully developed. Then prick a kernel using your fingernail. If it oozes a milky liquid, the corn is fresh.

How much corn you buy for your roast depends on what else you're serving. If meat makes up the main course, you can figure on about 1 to 1-1/2 ears per guest. But if corn is the main attraction, along with side dishes, bump that number up to 2 or 2-1/2. Don't be afraid to have extra, leftover

dress it up

Surprise your guests with a gussied-up corn roast. Break out your pretty linens, dinnerware and even silver.



Make this "cornhusk" vase. See page 56.

PHOTOS: ABOVE: GRACE NATOLI SHELTON; RIGHT: RP PHOTO



Corn-Cooking Basics

If you want a moist and mild ear of corn, soak your corn, husk and all, until the husk is fully penetrated, usually an hour or more. The silks will be easier to remove once the corn is cooked by wiping down the ear with a paper towel, but you can remove them before grilling as well.

Grill heat varies greatly, making it impossible to give an exact cooking time, but ears are usually done in 25 to 30 minutes. When the outer husks become brown and brittle, test kernels with a fork for softness.

Or for more outdoorsy flavor, grill ears out of their husks. Peel back the husks, remove the silk and wash the corn. When the corn is dry, brush oil on the kernels. Grill the corn over medium heat. Turn it every few minutes until lightly browned all over.

You can give corn savory aroma by wrapping it in heavy-duty foil with an herb-and-butter mixture. Turn corn on the grill for approximately 15 minutes and check for doneness. Although it may not be as “charming” as the charred-husk version, its flavor is remarkable and the foil package serves up neatly.

perature hits around 50° or better.

Three garden-friendly varieties to try are ‘Peaches-n-Cream,’ ‘Trinity’ and ‘Ambrosia.’ Since they mature and flower at different times, cross-pollination is less likely, so you’re free to plant them near each other in simple rows.

Because the home grower is out for the best flavor, these plants produce ears with 30 to 35 percent sugar content—sweeter than standard varieties, but without the tough kernel and growing complexities found in some of the super-sweet types.

Planted together, this tasty trio will keep you in ears all summer. These varieties bear corn about 2 weeks from each other, at 60 days, 70 days and 85 days from planting.

Setting the Table

Almost as important as the corn itself at a roast is the mood you create. Here are some tips to help you dress up your outdoor space:

Since you’ll probably be heading to your local farmers market for the main course, be sure to pick up some inexpensive seasonal flowers like daisies. A bouquet displayed in an old-fashioned metal watering can makes a charming centerpiece.

Running with the “silver” theme, smaller arrangements in empty food cans—with labels off and dressed in ribbon—add a sweet and simple touch to picnic tables. Just be sure to file down any sharp edges.

If your casual event relies on paper products, remember that corn is heavy—and it rolls. To avoid butter-soaked knees, invest in heavy-duty plates or purchase rectangular corn-shaped dishes. Corn

dishes are now available in plastic and are often paired with corn-holder picks so diners can avoid touching hot ears.

Corny Condiments

Set up a “beyond butter” condiment buffet for adventurous guests to try. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Set out fresh sliced lime, which can be paired with a dash of paprika or used to make lime butter on the spot.
- Provide bowls of commercially prepared olive oils infused with herbs like thyme. Swipe onto ears with a cooking brush.
- Put out shredded Parmesan or pepper Jack cheese to sprinkle on ears.
- Make several flavored butters, and serve them in little dishes. Fresh chopped herbs, spices and even a dash of hot sauce can make plain butter extraordinary. ✨



GRILLING/EATING CORN: GRACE NATOLI SHELTON; FARMERS MARKET: RDA, INC./IGD

Basil Butter (pictured below)

Fresh basil and zippy lemon pack a delicious punch in this recipe provided by Emily Chaney of Penobscot, Maine.

- 1-1/2 cups loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon seasoned pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt

Hot cooked corn on the cob

Place basil in a food processor; cover and process until coarsely chopped. Add the butter, lemon juice, seasoned pepper and garlic salt; cover and process until blended. Serve with corn. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 1-1/2 cups.

Cajun Butter (pictured at right)

Created by our Taste of Home Test Kitchen, this spread is sure to add some kick to your grilled corn.

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

Hot cooked corn on the cob

In a small bowl, combine the first seven ingredients. Serve with corn. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 1/2 cup.

Dress up grilled corn with flavored butters!



Herb Butter (pictured above)

Chopped herbs contribute to the garden-fresh flavor of this butter created by Donna Smith of Victor, New York.

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Dash garlic powder
Dash cayenne pepper
Hot cooked corn on the cob

In a small bowl, combine the first eight ingredients. Serve with corn. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 2/3 cup.

grilled corn on hand, as it is wonderful in salads and salsa and can even be reheated in the microwave.

A Tasty Trio

Home gardeners are often intimidated by the idea of raising towering stalks of corn in their own backyards. But, in reality, corn isn’t a hard crop to manage. You’ll want to plant your seeds, about a foot apart, when the soil tem-

