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Kitchen Diva Soup in the Summer?

by ANGELA SHELF MEDEARIS

When I think of summer recipes, I seldom think of soup. However, a well-balanced soup is the perfect way to highlight all the sweet, crisp flavors of freshly picked summer corn. Soups are a perfect dish in the winter, but they're easily a seasonal recipe with the right ingredients. Using both the corn kernels and the corn cob in a soup is a great way to quickly and deeply infuse the broth with flavor, creating a spoonful of summer with each bite. Corn on the cob is an essential part of a summer meal and provides many health benefits year-around. The average serving of corn on the cob has about a quarter of your daily requirement for thiamin, which helps maintain memory, as well as beta-cryptoxanthin, which aids in lung health. Corn is high in folic acid, which is needed by women who are taking oral contraceptives. It also is a good source of fiber and thiamine, and contains fair amounts of vitamin C, magnesium, niacin and potassium. One serving or one ear of corn has about 83 calories.

Here are some tips from the Utah State Extension Service for selecting and storing fresh corn:

* Look for corn with good green husk color, silk ends that are free from decay or worm injury, and stem ends that are not too discolored or dried. Select ears that are well-covered with plump, not too mature kernels. Avoid ears with undeveloped kernels, ears with very large kernels and dark yellow kernels because they can be tough and not very sweet.

* Husk one side of the corn. Press a fingernail into one of the kernels to test the liquid. Ripe corn should have a milky-looking liquid; overripe corn will have either a clear liquid or none at all.

* It is important to pick corn and process it within 2-3 hours. The sugar in corn is quickly lost, so for optimum quality process it as soon after picking as possible. If you can't cook fresh corn immediately, store it in the refrigerator.

This recipe for Sweet Corn Soup with Spicy Guacamole is the perfect showcase for fresh corn and summer vegetables. Soup in the summertime? Yes, please!



Photo Credit: DepositPhotos

SWEET CORN SOUP WITH SPICY GUACAMOLE

- 8 ears fresh sweet corn
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 chopped green onions, white and green parts, roots discarded,
- 1/2 fresh, small serrano pepper, chopped
- 2 jarred fire-roasted red peppers, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 1/2 cups reduced-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1/2 medium tomato, diced
- 2 tablespoons snipped fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon minced lime peel
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt
- 1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 large avocado, halved, seeded, peeled, and coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup crumbled queso fresco cheese

1. Using a sharp knife, cut the corn kernels off the cobs (should have about 4 cups). Set aside 3/4 cup of the corn for the guacamole. Set aside three of the corn cobs; discard remaining cobs.

2. In a large skillet heat 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons green onions, half the chopped serrano, half the chopped fire-roasted pepper and half of the garlic. Cook and stir for 4 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Remove from skillet and set aside.

3. Add 1 1/2 cups of the broth and reserved corn cobs to the skillet. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Using tongs, remove corn cobs and discard; reserve broth in skillet.

4. Add the 3 1/4 cups corn kernels to broth in the skillet. Bring to boil; reduce heat. Cover and simmer 4 to 5 minutes or until corn is tender. Cool slightly.

5. In a blender or food processor, combine cooked corn and pepper mixture. If using a blender, remove the center cap and cover the lid with a dish towel. Blend or process until almost smooth.

6. Return pureed mixture to the skillet. Slowly whisk in enough remaining broth to reach desired consistency; heat through. Keep soup warm while preparing guacamole.

7. For guacamole, in a large skillet, heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Add the 3/4 cup reserved corn kernels. Cook 8 to 10 minutes or until kernels are tender and lightly browned, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and cool slightly.

8. In a medium bowl combine toasted corn, the remaining garlic, green onion and peppers, the tomato, cilantro, lime peel, lime juice, salt and black pepper. Add the avocado. Lightly toss to combine. Ladle soup into bowls. Top with guacamole and sprinkle with crumbled queso fresco cheese.

Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis.

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