

## **Lend Me Your Ears**

One of the great taste experiences of summer in the Midwest is here and it all begins with the simple roadside sign, "Fresh Sweet Corn!" If you grew up in Silver Queen country you surely remember that first experience at the state or county fair when a perfectly grilled ear was dipped in a can of melted butter and handed to you.

My initiation with grilled sweet corn was at the Ohio State Fair in 1965 and oddly enough it never even occurred to me until decades later to prepare grilled corn on the cob myself on a home grill. Well I'm fully prepared to make up for lost time and I hope you'll join me in celebrating this wonderful vegetable which was probably first introduced to our founding fathers by Native Americans on the east coast.

In actual fact scientists believe corn first came on to the scene in central Mexico thousands of years ago where early farmers developed it from a wild grass called teosinte. It spread amongst Indians throughout North and South American and was commonly referred to as maize.

Here's a simple explanation of how we grill sweet corn although there are many variations of this process. A dear friend, Rick Viox, first shared this technique with me.

### **Grilled Sweet Corn**

(Serves 6)



12 large ears Silver Queen (Make every effort to get corn that has been picked right before you bought it. This will not happen at the supermarket; you'll need to get it at a farm stand you can trust or, best of all, from your own garden.)

1 clean soaking bucket  
real butter  
sea salt  
fresh ground pepper

Your grilling experience begins with preparing your corn. Although, there are supporters of the "no silk" approach, I've found that leaving the husks undisturbed with the silk on

the ear helps the corn "steam" more efficiently when it is on the grill. Also, after it has been cooked, the silk comes off more easily. There's also a wonderfully subtle smoky flavor imparted by the husks and silk when they begin to toast during the grilling.

Place the ears of corn you will cook into a clean container or bucket, silk end down. Add enough cold, fresh water to fully immerse the corn. Allow it to soak for 15 minutes to an hour.

Remove the corn and let it drain for a few seconds then arrange it on a preheated, medium gas or charcoal grill with the lid up. Watch your temperature and keep it as close to medium as possible. Your goal is to turn the corn from time to time and evenly toast the husks which lets you know that the corn will also be evenly cooked. Cooking time should be around 15 to 20 minutes.

If you really enjoy that honey brown, fully toasted finish on your ears take a little more time. Some diners prefer the chewy, slightly caramelized results of longer grill time. After a few grilling episodes you'll have a better idea of the results you want.

To serve, I suggest you wear clean, heavy rubber gloves to strip back the very hot husks. The silk will pull off with little difficulty and you can leave the husks on the ear if you like as a means of holding the ear for consumption. Next step is critical...lots of butter!

I've seen some great ingenuity when it comes to buttering ears of corn and if you've got a special system I'd love to hear about it. The two most efficient systems I've seen thus far are using a shallow, oblong dish filled with butter to roll the ear in, and filling a tall, narrow metal pot with butter, which is kept hot on the grill or stove for dipping. During the summer, my brother, Ken, keeps a stainless steel custom made pot filled with butter in the refrigerator. He had a friend who is talented with metal make it to specifications perfect for a large ear of corn. (I just love it when people are a little "over the top" when it comes to food enjoyment!)

Just before you dig in add salt and pepper to taste and enjoy! I normally figure two large ears per adult and one per small child but don't be shy...corn is a great deal this time of year and left over sweet corn had tons of uses.

One variation of this recipe that I have used which was pretty spectacular was bacon-grilled corn. The results were decidedly decadent and fun.

### **Grilled Sweet Corn with Bacon**

Using thin cut strips of hickory smoked or maple flavored bacon, remove the husks and silk from your sweet corn and wrap them in a spiral style with the bacon strips. Grill them on a medium grill being extra careful not to burn them. If you can't keep your temperature well under control it may be advisable to wrap the ears in foil until the very end when you remove the foil to crisp up the bacon. The corn will not be steamed as with our earlier technique, but actually grilled to a golden shade of brown and permeated with

the addictive essence and flavor of cooked bacon. You'll probably not need to add butter, if you know what I mean.

I've given some serious consideration to what one might want to serve in the way of wines with sweet corn and also taken advantage of the "field test" technique with some fairly solid results. The verdict is late harvest German Riesling Spaetlese and, if you prefer dryer whites, a fruit forward, buttery styled Chardonnay.

For the Spaetlese I would recommend the **2001 Burg Layer Schlosskapelle Riesling Spaetlese** from Kreuznacher Weinhaus imported by Günter Schlink. The fruit has real punch and marvelous fruit acid balance, which gives you a rich focused Granny Smith apple flavor with a clean, steely finish. These wines are often overlooked as appropriate matches with food but one taste and you'll understand my enthusiasm. The 2001 vintage in Germany was another remarkable harvest joining 2000 and 2002 as great vintages to snarf up while they're available.

The Chardonnay I would urge you to try is the **2000 Sapphire Hill Russian River Valley Chardonnay**. Award winning winemaker, Tim Meinken, has strived to present a rich, voluptuous Chardonnay brimming with tropical fruit, ripe peaches and hints of vanilla. The wine has characteristics normally only found in great white Burgundies with its subtle mineral tones and lush, thick textures.

We worked for 18 months to get access to this wine in Ohio and we were thrilled when Sapphire Hill Winery called us to inform us they were now in the Ohio market.

Please contact us if you have any food questions or need assistance in finding the perfect wine at 888-288-0668. You may also visit us online at [www.winedog.com](http://www.winedog.com). Cheers.