



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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Sweet Corn & The Science Behind the Selection

By Farmer Richard

"Some crops we grow for profit, others, i.e. sweet corn, we grow to make friends." –Farmer Richard, 1980

The genetics of corn breeding have changed dramatically since I started raising sweet corn in the 70's. Even then we sought out the exceptional! Sweet corn varieties are classified with terms that describe and classify their genetic traits. Back then, all corn was classified as SU (sugary), but we found that white corn had less pericarp (outer skin on the kernel) which made it much more tender. 'Country Gentleman' was an heirloom white corn with irregular rows, but it was tender, sweet, and had great corn flavor. While these were superior tasting varieties, all the SU corns had a rapid conversion of sugar-to-starch which shortened the shelf life. If promptly cooled and iced, you had a few good days, but eating the same day was by far the best!

Then came the SE (sugar enhanced) varieties. The conversion of sugar-to-starch was much slower and we found bi-color corn to be much more tender, but still the rapid cooling and cold temperature kept the SE corn very sweet for several days. Next, Sh2 (shrunken gene) varieties were being produced. The sugar-to-starch conversion was greatly slowed, but they had a thick pericarp, read "tough and not tender." Some newer Sh2 and SE 'synergistic' varieties have managed to achieve most of the desirable characteristics including good corn flavor, sweetness, slow conversion of sugar-to-starch, plus cold soil vigor and a tight husk on top to deter corn earworms from entering the ear. All of the above improvements have been accomplished with natural breeding. Unfortunately, in the last 10 years, most conventional sweet corn is now genetically modified to produce the Bt toxin in every part of the plant. But in addition to killing root worms and earworms it has been devastating to other butterflies, including the Monarch.

See our [blog](#) for the rest of this article!

What's In The Box?

ZUCCHINI OR YELLOW SUMMER SQUASH: Cut zucchini into large chunks and use them to make kabobs to cook on the grill. Alternate zucchini chunks with big pieces of onions, peppers and grape tomatoes.

SILVER SLICER OR GREEN CUCUMBERS: Silver Slicer is not a common cucumber you'll see on store shelves. We think this variety is superior to most green cucumber varieties for a number of reasons including flavor and shelf life. This cucumber has a fruity flavor and stays firm and crisp longer than green slicer cucumbers.

WHITE SPANISH ONIONS: We'll have this onion for another two weeks or so. This variety is meant to be eaten fresh and is a sweet, flavorful onion.

MISSOURI GARLIC: This is one of our porcelain type garlic varieties. It has a bold, but not overpowering flavor.

RED GRAPE OR SUNORANGE OR CHOCOLATE SPRINKLES TOMATOES:

These little tomatoes are great to just pop in your mouth for a quick snack, but they can also help you get dinner on the table really fast! Cut them in half and sauté in olive oil along with garlic just until the point where they soften and become juicy. Toss cooked spaghetti noodles into the pan with the tomatoes, add a little more olive oil and a bit of the pasta cooking water to make a light, simple sauce to coat the pasta. Finish it with fresh basil and oregano.

CARROTS: Carrots are great in stir-fries and would go well with other vegetables such as peppers, onions, and green beans (all in this week's box)!

GREEN BELL PEPPERS AND/OR ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: Green Bells are the more rounded peppers with blocky shoulders and base. Italian Frying Peppers are the long, skinny pepper. They may be used interchangeably.

JALAPEÑO PEPPERS: If you aren't going to use these this week, put them in a freezer bag to preserve them to use in the off season.

SWEET SARAH MELON: Sweet Sarah melons are a cantaloupe with finely netted and sometimes smooth rind. They have a sweet, flavorful flesh that isn't musky as some other cantaloupe varieties.

FRENCH ORANGE MELON: This is the small, personal sized melon with a tan rind that is more coarsely netted and sometimes has slight ridges. This is our most flavorful melon that is a cross between a French charentais melon and a cantaloupe. The flesh is very aromatic, smooth and flavorful with a nice balance of sweetness.

SWEET CORN: See this week's [main article](#) and [vegetable feature](#) for more information about sweet corn. And don't forget...keep it cold!

VARIETY OF TOMATOES: It's best to store tomatoes at room temperature until you're ready to use them. Refrigerating tomatoes at a colder temperature can cause flavor and texture changes in the tomato making them flavorless and mealy.

GREEN BEANS: This variety of bean is more tender than the green beans we had been delivering. Blanch them and eat them in a cold summer vegetable salad.

CHOICE: SWEETHEART CABBAGE—This is a delicious, tender salad cabbage. Please do not take more than one head per vegetable share.

Featured Vegetable: Sweet Corn

There's always some excitement around sweet corn, after all it is a classic summer vegetable loved by most! Farmer Richard enjoys the challenge of growing "the best" sweet corn, a delicate balance between choosing a variety with good genetics, one that will perform under challenging field conditions, and one with good corn flavor and just the right balance of sweetness and tenderness. No small task!

As for eating sweet corn, it's important to keep sweet corn cold. After the corn is picked, sugars will start to convert to starch. Keeping corn cold will slow this process down, preserve the quality and sweetness and give you a few more days to enjoy it. One of the qualities Richard looks for in a sweet corn variety is the rate of conversion of sugars to starch. We choose ones that have been developed to have a slower conversion rate, which gives you more time to eat and enjoy the corn before it becomes starchy and compromised. Despite the fact that you see people selling and transporting corn out of the back of a pickup truck, this is not the best tactic. We take ice to the field when we harvest it, ice it again when it comes in and store it in the cooler until we pack it and load it on a refrigerated truck. We do what we can to grow the tastiest corn for you, but you need to do your part too! Take a cooler with you when you pick up your box, store it in the refrigerator and eat it within a few days. If you have limited refrigerator space, husk the corn and put it in a plastic bag before refrigerating it.

*See our **blog** for the rest of this vegetable feature article!*

Cooking With This Week's Box!

Can you believe this week marks the halfway point in our CSA season? This week we're packing box #15 of our 30 week season. Yesterday Jose Antonio asked me if I'd taken a look at the winter squash field recently. His observation was they look like they're almost ready to harvest! Yes, the reality that fall is just around the corner is very present in our minds, but we can't dwell on that thought too long because we still have a lot of summer distractions. So let's focus on some of those delicious summer distractions this week starting with Sweet Corn! This is a bountiful week for sweet corn and it is delicious! This week we're picking a new variety called Kickoff that is proving to be quite tasty. I hope you'll agree. Of course you may choose to just boil or grill your corn on the cob, slather it with butter and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. You can't go wrong with this and often that's the way we eat it. But you don't have to eat corn on the cob. It's a great addition to other dishes including salads such as the **Corn & Tomato Salad with Torn Croutons** that we've featured in this week's newsletter (see below).

*See our **blog** for the rest of Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box including recipe links!*

Corn and Tomato Salad with Torn Croutons

Yield: 4 servings

Kernels cut from 3 ears sweet corn, plus the milky pulp scraped from the cob (about 2 cups total)	¼ cup red wine vinegar	½ cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese
1 lb tomatoes (all shapes and colors) cored and cut into wedges or chunks, or whatever looks pretty	Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper	1 handful basil leaves
1 medium white Spanish onion, sliced thinly	2 cups torn croutons (see recipe below)	1 handful mint leaves
	½ cup pistachios, toasted and roughly chopped	½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to taste

1. Put the corn, tomatoes, and onions in a large bowl. Add the vinegar and toss gently to mix. Season generously with salt and pepper and toss. Taste and adjust the seasoning so the salad is nicely bright.
2. Add the croutons, pistachios, pecorino, basil, and mint and toss again. Taste and adjust the salt and pepper. Moisten with ½ cup olive oil and toss again. Taste and adjust. Serve lightly chilled or at a little cooler than room temperature.

Torn Croutons

Yield: about 2 cups

2 large, thick slices country loaf (about 4oz)
2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. Heat the oven to 400°F.
2. Tear the bread, crust and all, into bite-size pieces. Toss the torn bread with the olive oil and a light sprinkling of salt and pepper.
3. Spread the croutons on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake until golden brown, checking every 4 to 5 minutes and moving the outside croutons to the center of the pan so they cook evenly. Don't let them get rock hard; leave a little bit of chew in the center. The total baking time will depend on the type and density of bread you're using, but most likely will be 10 to 20 minutes.
4. Slide onto paper towels to absorb any extra oil and season again lightly with salt and pepper. Store the croutons in an airtight container. (Be sure to make more than you need for your recipe because you'll find yourself eating these as a snack.)

These recipes were adapted from *Six Seasons, A new way with vegetables* by Joshua McFadden with Martha Holmberg.