



Corn and Zucchini Soup with Crumbled Bacon

The texture of the fried corn, bacon and thyme garnish elevates this humble dish. You can make the soup ahead of time, but prepare the garnish just before serving.

6 thick-cut bacon slices
1 Tbs. olive oil
1 yellow onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
2 zucchini, trimmed, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced
4 cups chicken broth
3 cups fresh corn kernels (from about 6 ears)
Salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
¼ tsp. minced fresh thyme

In a large, heavy pot over medium heat, cook the bacon, turning once, until crispy, about 8 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Let cool, then cut into bite-size pieces. Set aside.

Discard all but 1 Tbs. of the bacon fat from the pot. Add the olive oil, onion and garlic and sauté over medium-high heat until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the zucchini and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add 2½ cups of the corn kernels and cook for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly.

Working in batches, puree the soup in a blender. Return the soup to the pot and season with salt and white pepper.

In a small fry pan over high heat, melt the butter. Add the remaining ½ cup corn kernels, the bacon and the thyme. Fry, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat.

Serve the soup topped with the corn and bacon mixture. Serves 4 to 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Soup of the Day*, by Kate McMillan (Weldon Owen, 2011).



Sweet Corn Ice Cream with Blackberry Sauce

The natural sweetness of freshly harvested corn combines with cream to create an unusual—but delicious—ice cream. With a drizzle of fresh blackberry sauce that's a fruity counterpoint to the rich ice cream, this cooling dessert captures summer in a bowl.

4 ears of fresh sweet corn, husks and silk removed
3 cups half-and-half
1 cup heavy cream, plus more as needed
¾ cup plus ½ cup sugar
Pinch of salt
¼ cup water
2½ pints blackberries
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice

Using a chef's knife, cut the kernels off the corn cobs. Add the kernels and cobs to a large pot along with the half-and-half and the 1 cup cream. Add the ¾ cup sugar and the salt and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and let steep for at least 3 hours or up to overnight. (If steeping for longer than 3 hours, refrigerate the mixture.)

Strain the corn mixture through a fine-mesh sieve. Using your hands, wring out the cobs and press on the kernels with a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible; discard the cobs and kernels. Measure the liquid; you should have about 3 cups. If not, add more cream as needed. Cover and refrigerate the corn-infused mixture for at least 3 hours or up to 8 hours.

In a nonreactive saucepan, bring the ½ cup sugar and the water to a boil over medium-high heat. Add 2 pints of the blackberries and stir to combine. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the berries break down, about 8 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a blender and add the lemon juice. Puree the berry mixture, then strain it through a fine-mesh sieve. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Freeze the chilled corn-infused mixture in an ice-cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. If desired, pack it into an airtight container and freeze until very firm.

To serve, scoop the ice cream into bowls, drizzle with the blackberry sauce, top with a few of the remaining blackberries and serve immediately. Makes 1 quart ice cream; serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *New Flavors for Desserts*, by Raquel Pelzel (Oxmoor House, 2008).

August 5, 2012

Grow, Cook, Eat: Summer Vegetables

Summer's freshest cooking inspiration is as close as your backyard garden or local farmers' market. Celebrate the season with these delicious dishes that showcase seasonal gems—bell peppers, corn and zucchini.

Selecting Summer Vegetables

Bell Peppers: Buy firm, smooth, bright-colored peppers. Bell peppers may be green, red, yellow, orange, brown or purple. Green peppers are usually sharper flavored, more plentiful and less expensive than peppers of other colors. They are immature and do not ripen once picked. Red bell peppers are simply a more mature (and sweeter) stage of green bell peppers. The other colors are separate varieties of peppers. Refrigerate the peppers as soon as you get them home, storing them loosely in a perforated plastic bag. Green peppers keep for at least 1 week; use red, yellow orange and purple peppers within 5 or 6 days.

Corn: Corn is at its best when just picked, with the freshest ears usually found at farmers' markets. Choose ears with green husks and no signs of browning or drying. They should feel cool, never noticeably warm. The silk, or tassels, should be pale yellow and moist. The kernels should be tightly packed in even rows and look plump and juicy. When you tear back the husk to view the corn in the market, you are shortening its shelf life. Once the husk is removed, the corn begins to lose moisture and freshness more quickly.

Keep fresh sweet corn wrapped in its husks in the refrigerator until you are ready to cook it, preferably for no longer than a day. The natural sugar begins to turn to starch the minute the ear is picked, so consume corn as soon as possible, although this time-honored admonishment is not as true as it once was. Growers have developed new supersweet and sugar-enhanced varieties that make longer storage possible. Hence, some fresh in-season corn will keep for more than a day.

Zucchini: Zucchini are at their best during the summer. Select zucchini that are dark, firm and heavy for their size. Small ones will have a crisp texture and a sweet flavor; they become softer and more bitter as they grow bigger. Store zucchini for up to 3 days wrapped in paper towels in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use delicate and highly perishable squash blossoms within 1 day of purchasing.

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Baked Penne with Corn, Zucchini and Basil

Enriched with two kinds of cheeses, this baked pasta showcases favorite summer vegetables at their seasonal best, including sweet corn, zucchini and fresh tomatoes.

Kosher salt, to taste
½ lb. penne
6 Tbs. olive oil, plus more as needed
Kernels cut from 2 ears of corn
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
8 zucchini, about 2 lb. total, cut into half-moons
½ yellow onion, diced
4 tomatoes, cored, seeded and cut into 1-inch chunks
1 Tbs. sliced garlic
1 tsp. chopped fresh oregano
¼ tsp. red pepper flakes
1 Tbs. tomato paste
¼ cup white wine
½ cup thinly sliced fresh basil
6 oz. mozzarella cheese, grated
2 oz. Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated

Preheat an oven to 400°F.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Generously salt the water, add the pasta and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente, about 8 minutes. Drain the pasta and rinse under cold running water. Set aside.

In a 12-inch nonstick ovenproof fry pan over medium-high heat, warm 3 Tbs. of the olive oil. Add the corn, season with salt and black pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the corn is lightly golden, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Set aside.

Return the pan to medium-high heat and warm the remaining 3 Tbs. olive oil. Working in batches, add the zucchini, season with salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini is tender and golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Add to the bowl with the corn. Repeat with the remaining zucchini, adding more oil to the pan as needed.

Set the pan over medium-low heat. Add the onion, 1 tsp. salt and black pepper, to taste. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, about 2 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes, garlic, oregano and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes soften and begin to form a sauce, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute. Add the wine and cook until the wine has reduced and the sauce is fairly thick, about 3 minutes more.

Add the pasta, tomato sauce, basil, mozzarella and half of the Parmigiano-Reggiano to the bowl with the vegetables and stir to combine. Transfer to the fry pan and sprinkle the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano on top. Transfer the pan to the oven and bake until golden brown on top, 20 to 25 minutes. Serve warm. Serves 8.

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2 Tbs. vegetable oil, plus more for brushing
½ large red onion, diced
1 zucchini, diced
1 cup fresh corn kernels
2 oz. baby spinach, cut into ½-inch strips
1 cup cooked and shredded chicken breast
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
5 oz. Monterey jack cheese, shredded
1 jar (1 lb. 9 oz.) green enchilada starter
12 corn tortillas, each about 6¾ inches in diameter
Sour cream for serving
Avocado slices for serving

Chicken and Summer Vegetable Enchiladas Verde

This recipe features our favorite summer vegetables, but feel free to swap in others as you wish. For a vegetarian version, substitute 1 cup of additional vegetables for the chicken.

Preheat an oven to 350°F.

In a large nonstick sauté pan over medium heat, warm the 2 Tbs. oil. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 4 minutes. Add the zucchini and corn and cook, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini is tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Fold in the spinach, chicken, salt and pepper. Transfer to a bowl and let cool for 10 minutes. Stir in all but 1 cup of the cheese.

Pour ½ cup of the enchilada starter into a 9-by-13-inch baking pan and spread evenly. Brush both sides of the tortillas lightly with oil. Stack 6 tortillas on a large microwavable plate and cover with damp paper towels. Microwave on high for 1 minute. Place ¼ cup of the chicken-vegetable mixture along one edge of a tortilla and roll it up. Place the enchilada, seam side down, in the pan. Repeat with the remaining tortillas and filling, heating the remaining tortillas and arranging the enchiladas so they line up snugly in the pan. Pour the remaining enchilada starter on top of the enchiladas and sprinkle with the remaining 1 cup cheese. Bake until the cheese is melted, about 30 minutes. Serve with sour cream and avocado slices. Serves 6.

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1 globe eggplant, stemmed
2 large red bell peppers
2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
¼ cup plus 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 tsp. salt, plus more, to taste
½ cup fresh basil leaves, torn
1 cup quinoa, well rinsed
2 garlic cloves, minced
1½ cups water
2 large heirloom tomatoes

Quinoa Salad with Bell Pepper, Tomato and Eggplant

Snap up the hot-weather eggplants and heirloom tomatoes at the market, and indulge in this late-summer feast. Quinoa cooks up faster than rice, making it perfect for weeknight suppers, and leftovers hold up well in packed lunches to bring to school or work.

Trim the eggplant, then cut it lengthwise into slices ½ inch thick. Cut the bell peppers in half lengthwise and remove the seeds, ribs and stems. In a large bowl or a shallow baking dish, combine the vinegar, the ¼ cup olive oil and ½ tsp. of the salt. Add the eggplant, peppers and ¼ cup of the basil. Stir several times to coat, then marinate for 30 minutes, stirring several times.

In a saucepan over medium heat, warm the 1 Tbs. olive oil. Add the quinoa and garlic and sauté until the quinoa is opaque, about 2 minutes. Slowly add the water and the remaining ½ tsp. salt and bring to a simmer. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer until the water has been absorbed and the quinoa is tender to the bite, about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand, covered, until ready to use.

Prepare a hot fire in a grill.

Remove the vegetables from the marinade, reserving the marinade, and lay them directly on the grill or in a single layer in a grilling basket. Cook on one side until lightly charred, 6 to 7 minutes for the eggplant and 4 minutes for the peppers. Turn the vegetables over and cook until lightly charred on the other side. Transfer the peppers to a bowl, cover and let steam for 10 minutes. Transfer the eggplant to a platter and cut each slice in half. When the peppers are cool enough to handle, peel and cut into ½-inch pieces.

Cut the tomatoes into slices a scant ½ inch thick, reserving the trimmings, and lay a slice on each of 6 salad plates. Finely chop the trimmings and add them to the reserved marinade. Add the quinoa to the marinade and stir several times to coat. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt.

Top each tomato with a scoop of quinoa, a slice of eggplant and a sprinkling of grilled peppers. Garnish with the remaining ¼ cup basil and serve. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Salad of the Day*, by Georgeanne Brennan (Weldon Owen, 2012).