



Using, Storing and Preserving

Sweet Corn



Prepared by:

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Michigan-grown sweet corn is available during August and September.

Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Sweet Corn was first published in March 2015 and revised in July 2023.

Food Safety and Storage

- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Preserve corn within 2 to 6 hours of harvest for best quality.
- Pick or purchase a product that is not buggy or damaged.
- Do not wash corn in the husk before storing. Store the corn in its husk in the refrigerator.
- After removing husk and silk, wash corn under cool running water before preparing it. Do not use soap.
- Keep corn away from raw meat and meat juices to prevent cross-contamination.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve no more than your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

1 pound	=	five medium ears of corn or 5 to 6 half-cup servings of corn kernels
4 to 5 pounds of corn	=	2 pints frozen or canned corn kernels
20 pounds (in husks)	=	a canner load of 9 pints
31½ pounds (in husks)	=	a canner load of 7 quarts
1 bushel (in husks)	=	35 pounds



How to Preserve

Freezing whole corn kernels

Select ears with plump, tender kernels and thin, sweet milk. Remove husks and silk. Wash corn under cool running water. Blanch ears in boiling water for 4 minutes. Cool promptly in ice water for 4 minutes and drain. Cut kernels from cob at about two-thirds the depth of the kernels. (For cream-style corn, cut the kernels at about the center of the kernel and then scrape the cobs with the back of the knife to remove the juice and hearts of the kernels.) *Tip:* Use a fluted or tube-style pan such as a Bundt cake pan to keep the corn cob steady in the center and to catch the scraped kernels. Pack corn into freezer containers or freezer bags, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Freezing corn on the cob

Increase blanching time to 7 minutes for small ears, 9 minutes for medium ears and 11 minutes for large ears. Immerse in ice water for the same amount of time that corn was blanched, then blot dry with paper toweling. Tightly wrap ears individually in moisture vapor-proof film and pack in plastic freezer bags. Seal, label, date and freeze the cobs. Do not freeze more than 1 quart (2 to 3 pounds) of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. One cubic foot will hold 30 quarts of food.

Canning corn

Pressure canning is the *only* safe method of canning corn. Corn *must* be pressure canned to avoid the potential of the foodborne illness botulism.

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Canning whole-kernel corn

Select ears containing slightly immature kernels, or corn of ideal quality for eating fresh. Canning some sweeter varieties or kernels that are too immature may result in browning. White sweet corn varieties can appear a little grayish after canning and have less nutrition than yellow or bicolor varieties. Can a small amount and check color and flavor before canning large quantities. Remove husks and silk. Wash corn under cool running water. Blanch 3 minutes in boiling water. Cut corn from cob at about two-thirds the depth of the kernels. An electric knife works well for this.

Caution: *Do not scrape cob.* Scraping removes the starchy liquid from the kernels and increases the time required to safely process the corn.

Hot pack: Add 1 cup boiling water to each 4 cups of corn and bring to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes. Pack hot corn into hot jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add ½ teaspoon salt to pints, 1 teaspoon to quarts, if desired. Fill jar to 1 inch from top with boiling hot cooking liquid. Remove air bubbles; adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with a clean paper towel, adjust lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

Raw pack: Pack raw corn kernels into hot jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add ½ teaspoon salt to pints, 1 teaspoon to quarts, if desired. Fill jars to 1 inch from top with boiling water. Remove air bubbles; adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with a clean paper towel, adjust lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

Canning cream-style corn

Remove corn husks and silk; wash ears. Blanch ears 4 minutes in boiling water. Cut corn from cob at center of kernel. Scrape remaining corn from cobs with a table knife. **Caution:** Michigan State University Extension does not recommend quart jars because of the denseness of the canned product.

Hot pack: Add 1 cup boiling water to each 2 cups of corn, bring to a boil. Pack corn into hot pint jars, leaving 1-inch headspace; add ½ teaspoon salt, if desired. Remove air bubbles; adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with a clean paper towel, adjust lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

References

Andress, E., & Harrison, J. A. (2014). *So easy to preserve* (Bulletin 989). (6th ed.). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

Michigan State University Extension. (2006). *Food preservation series: Corn.*

Penn State Extension, College of Agricultural Sciences. (2008). *Let's preserve: Sweet corn.* <https://extension.psu.edu/lets-preserve-sweet-corn>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Complete guide to home canning* (Rev. ed.). (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539). http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html

Recommended process time (in minutes) for whole-kernel corn in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
			0 – 2,000 ft	2,001 – 4,000 ft	4,001 – 6,000 ft	6,001 – 8,000 ft
Hot and raw	Pints	55	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.
	Quarts	85	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.

Recommended process time (in minutes) for whole-kernel corn in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of	
			0 – 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot and raw	Pints	55	10 lb.	15 lb.
	Quarts	85	10 lb.	15 lb.

Let jars sit undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours, check lids to be sure they've sealed, remove rings, wash jars, date, label and store. Food in jars that do not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid within 24 hours, refrigerated or frozen.

Tables were adapted from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning: Guide 4: Selecting, Preparing and Canning Vegetables and Vegetable Products*, USDA, 2015, p. 12. https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html#gsc.tab=0

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Pickled Corn Relish

10 cups fresh whole-kernel corn (16 to 20 medium-sized ears) or six 10-oz packages of frozen corn
 2½ cups diced sweet red peppers
 2½ cups diced sweet green peppers
 2½ cups chopped celery
 1¼ cups diced onions

1¾ cups sugar
 5 cups vinegar (5 percent acidity)
 2½ tbsp canning or pickling salt
 2½ tsp celery seed
 2½ tbsp dry mustard
 1¼ tsp turmeric

Note: Adding the amount of vinegar indicated in this recipe is critical for the recipe to be safe when canning using a boiling water bath canner.

Fresh corn: Remove husks and silk. Cook ears of corn in boiling water about 5 minutes; remove and plunge into cold water. Drain; cut from the cob. Do not scrape the cob.

Frozen corn: Defrost in the refrigerator overnight or in a microwave oven.

This recipe is designed for half-pint or pint jars only.

To make relish:

Combine peppers, celery, onions, sugar, vinegar, salt and celery seed. Cover pan and heat until mixture starts to boil, then simmer uncovered for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Mix mustard and turmeric in ½ cup of the simmered mixture. Add this mixture and corn to the hot mixture. Simmer another 5 minutes. If desired, thicken mixture with flour paste (¼ cup flour blended in ¼ cup water) and stir frequently to prevent sticking and scorching. Fill jars with hot mixture, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process 15 minutes in a boiling water bath. Let jars stand undisturbed for 24 hours, remove rings, check to make sure lids are sealed, wash jars, label, date and store.

"Pickled Corn Relish" recipe is adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation recipe of the same name, reviewed February 2018 (https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/pickled_corn_relish.html). The NCHFP adapted it from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin, No. 539), USDA, 2015.

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh/.

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