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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, July 23, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CORN-ON-THE-COB - HUNDRED PERCENT AMERICAN DISH." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Corn-on-the-cob is my theme this broadcast period. For most of us Americans corn-on-the-cob has a pleasant, home-y sound. We've eaten it at informal meals at home since our childhood.

But we've not met it in "high society" until fairly recently. I suppose those little silver handled prongs you push into each end of the cob have helped corn-on-the-cob gain entrance into Society. They certainly do help keep a person's fingers out of the butter. And incidently save on napkins!

Familiar as table corn is to Americans, some people still need guidance when they go shopping for it. A young woman I know brought home some nice big ears of corn the other day. And when she served them, she was quite crushed because her husband said the corn was not sweet. In fact he was brutally frank and declared it to be too hard and tough to be fit to eat!

Most of you listeners could have told her that in the first place she shouldn't have expected that corn to taste especially sweet. It was field corn, not sweet corn, and naturally is less sweet. You and I know that here in the United States sweet corn isn't usually to be found until the latter half of July.

Southern farmers raise the season's first fresh corn and what they raise both for themselves and to ship north is field corn. Then what they can not sell for table use, they can use for the stock. And another thing, the ear worm is a harder pest to fight with sweet corn than it is with field corn.

Farmers don't try to pass this field corn off as sweet corn. They call it "roasting ears" or "green corn." And most of us shoppers know perfectly well that roasting ears are not sweet corn. But we know, too, that roasting ears are mighty good, when you get them at the right stage and cook them soon after they are picked.

Whether you are buying roasting ears or honest-to-goodness sweet corn you can tell a lot about the kernels from the looks of the husks. Those corn husks should be a fresh green. When they begin to look dry and yellowed, beware of them. Field corn husks are usually smooth, whereas sweet corn husks often have a twist toward the tip, which makes the husks hang free in ribbon-like ends instead of clinging tightly to the tip of the ear.

The size of the ear doesn't tell you a thing about the size of the kernels on the cob. The slender ear may have just as plump kernels as a large, coarse ear. And field corn ears run considerably larger than sweet corn ears do. An 8-inch



ear is a good long one for Golden Bantam, for instance. Some newly developed strains are bigger, however. And Country Gentlemen sweet corn runs larger than the Golden Bantam.

Both sweet corn and roasting ears should be juicy and tender. The kernels should be bright, plump, and milky, firm enough to offer a little resistance to pressure.

If the kernels are not mature enough, they will be very small, soft, and without much flavor. If the corn is too mature, the kernels will have a doughy texture instead of a milky one. You can not tell from the color of the kernels whether your ear of corn is field or sweet. There are yellow and white varieties among both.

You don't need to be too concerned about worm injury if that worm injury is confined to the tips. There you can cut it out without much loss. But when those worms attack the side of the ear, that's objectionable!

You know, - I suspect that the chief trouble with the young friend I told you of - was that she held her corn too long before she cooked it. From the field directly into the pot - that's the ideal procedure. Few foods deteriorate as fast as does corn, and especially roasting ears. You buy either roasting ears or sweet corn one day and wait until the next to cook it - and there will be a noticeable loss of palatability.

Not every American housewife knows how to cook corn-on-the-cob properly - strange though that may seem. In the first place, corn should be simmered, not subjected to violently boiling water. In the second place, a large quantity of water is not necessary for the cooking. Thirdly, it should not be overcooked. Five to 10 minutes is long enough with young, tender corn. You cook it too long and you've lost some of the flavor and made the kernels harder. Fourthly, don't let the corn stand in the water after it is cooked.

Maybe your family is cold to corn-on-the-cob. If it is, you can slice off the kernels after the corn is cooked, season it - maybe put a little cream on it. But whether the corn is served on the cob or not, cook it so, in order to conserve all the flavor and nutritive value.

Speaking of nutrition, - you probably know that sweet corn is one of the carbohydrate foods. Very young sweet corn is about 15 percent carbohydrate, which places it in the same class as grapes and apples. But corn's carbohydrate content increases rapidly as it matures, so that kernels of medium maturity come into the 20 to 25 percent carbohydrate class of vegetables and fruits - which means lots of calories.

What is less widely known is that sweet corn is rich in phosphorus and that it carries some vitamin C - about half that of tomatoes, weight for weight.

To summarize what we've said: "Roasting ears" means field corn, not sweet corn. At the best eating stage, kernels of either should be bright, plump, and juicy. You should buy only one meal's supply of corn at a time, and cook it as soon as possible after it is picked. Simmer it - don't boil it rapidly. Cook it as short a time as possible, and don't let the ears stand in the water after they are done.

