

Seasonal Eating
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Sweet Corn—The Taste of Summer
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Sweet corn ushers in the summer season along with vine ripe summer tomatoes. The farmers market gets into full swing this month and brings in the corn vendors. While frozen and canned corn have their place, there is nothing like the sweet, milky, bursting flavor of fresh corn, on or off the cob.

There are all kinds of gadgets on the market for removing the kernels from the cobs. From dangerous looking mandolin type boards with blades to plastic donut orbs that surround the cob like an alien invasion. In canning training this year, we used a handheld object similar to a computer mouse with a blade underneath. While it worked just fine, I usually opt for just a chef's knife and the corn in the hole of a Bundt pan for catching the kernels so they don't fly all over the kitchen.



It works for any size cob, allows me to cut as deeply as needed and then lets me scrape down the cob with the dull side of the knife to get all of the milk out of the remaining kernel parts for creamed corn. And my knife and Bundt pan work for other kitchen tasks as well.

My Mom made shrimp and grits the other day for dinner – a favorite meal. So that got me to thinking about using fresh corn in a takeoff of this famous dish. Instead of grits, why not use creamed corn? Sweet, thick and full of fresh flavor. Then to top it off, why not use a spicy Cajun shrimp to contrast with the sweet corn? The result was a beautiful dish that is perfect for mid-summer.

Be careful in selecting your Cajun or Creole seasoning. Many of them have salt as a first ingredient and deliver a flavor that is too salty when you get the right amount of heat. Look for ones that list spices first or use a salt free version and add just a little salt to taste. You can also make your own blend using spices such as paprika, onion powder, garlic powder, dried oregano, dried thyme, cayenne pepper and black pepper. This way you can control the amount of heat and salt. If you don't want any heat, just leave out the cayenne pepper. The recipe below calls for 1 teaspoon of Cajun seasoning but you can adjust this to your liking and particular type of seasoning.

What makes this dish special is the toppings. Bacon, Cheddar cheese, green onions and black olives add flavor and texture so don't skip them. Get these ready first, then cook your corn and the shrimp in separate skillet. You won't want to miss this great use of summer corn.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating (bedford.tennessee.edu).

Creamed Corn with Cajun Shrimp

3 slices bacon, chopped
1/2 onion, chopped, divided
3-4 ears fresh corn, kernels removed and cobs scraped
1 teaspoon sugar
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
3/4 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 green bell pepper, chopped
6 ounces medium raw shrimp, shelled and deveined
1 teaspoon Cajun Seasoning
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
2 tablespoons sliced green onions
2 tablespoons sliced black olives

In a large skillet, fry the bacon until crisp. Remove the bacon to a paper towel and reserve. Drain all but 1 tablespoon bacon grease from the pan and then add half the onion and all of the corn. Cook over medium high heat until onion is softened and corn begins to stick to the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle with sugar, cornstarch, salt and pepper and stir in. Add the cream and let simmer until thickened. Meanwhile, in another skillet, melt the butter and add the remaining chopped onion and bell peppers. Cook over medium high heat until softened. Sprinkle the shrimp with the Cajun seasoning and paprika and add to pan. Cook just until shrimp become opaque. Remove from heat. Spoon corn into the bottom of two flat bowls and top with shrimp. Sprinkle with bacon, green onions, cheese and black olives.