

# Good Food NEWS

## At the Mercy of Mother Nature: a story about the gambles of farming

by Mark-Jan Daalderop

When I spoke with one of our farmers on the phone recently, he sadly told me that they had not received rain in 5 weeks. I remember my own experience of drought and felt sympathy for all the farmers who face such uncertainty each and every day.

Here is my story.

Two years ago I stood in a field of a small farm in Southern Ontario with a garden hose in my hand. I was trying to save a row of cabbages that were hanging limp and desperate for even a drop of water. My body was tired from the constant pounding of the afternoon sun and my throat burned from the dust collected inside. This particular year we were praying for rain, praying each day that the clouds would cover the molten fireball that burned our skin and made the soil so hot it burned our feet. We had not received a drop of rain for more than 5 weeks and with the intensity of the sun our plants were holding on for dear life.

The summer of 2004, the year before, had been perfect, just the right mixture of rain and sunshine. The crops thrived and our market and food boxes were bountiful. This year we were already getting complaints from our food box recipients, and the organization was getting upset that we weren't growing food. The tension in the air was thick making everyone irritable and fearful of the worst: losing our crops and losing our jobs. "This is ridiculous, when is it ever going to rain?" I said frustrated, my friend and coworker responded by saying "Welcome to the life of a farmer".

At the end of the fifth week of no rain, while watering the tomatoes, the clouds began to form and the sky became dark. We held our breath. This would not be the first time the sky would tease us with the possibility of rain. The plants started to sway in the warm breeze, the light faded, and a sweet smell of a storm filled my

senses. A raindrop fell, hitting the dry soil and created a small crater and dust plume. We all stopped working and stood frozen, trying not to make any motion in fear that the clouds would see us and move on.

The rain thundered down in great streams from the sky and created rivers between the rows, creating deep cuts in the fields and flooding in some areas. We were elated, almost to tears of joy. I understood, then, why cultures have celebrated the harvest: because there is no guarantee that it will come.

We now rely on the global food system, where droughts, floods, and major crop losses go almost unnoticed, except maybe in the cost of our food. When the dry weather caused a decline in Ontario strawberry production we bought from California...no big deal. This ability to tap into the global food system has in some ways increased our food security yet at the same time has changed the way we value food and celebrate it.

### What's local in your GFB this week and the farmers who grew it:

#### *In the conventional boxes:*

from a variety of Ontario farmers, through the Ontario Food Terminal:  
corn, carrots, peaches, field tomatoes, cucumber, onion, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, mushrooms, and potatoes

#### *In the organic boxes:*

Pfennings: Corn, Leeks, Eggplant  
Mike Lanigan: Kale  
Lena Horst: Garlic  
Hope Organics: Tomatoes, Orange Honeydew melons, Potatoes

Help us Replant ourselves!



# Food Share

Field to Table Centre

90 Croatia St. Toronto, ON M6H 1K9 t: 416. 363. 6441 xt 221 f: 416. 363 0474 e: info@foodshare.net www.foodshare.net

As of July 31st the Good Food Box is being packed at 90 Croatia St!



# recipes

## Salsa de Elote Fresh Corn Salsa

- 4 ears fresh corn, shucked
- 1/2 med white onion, finely chopped
- 1 to 2 minced fresh chiles-serrano or jalapeno
- 1 ripe tomato, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, loosely packed & chopped
- 3 TBS fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp vegetable or olive oil
- 1/2 tsp salt

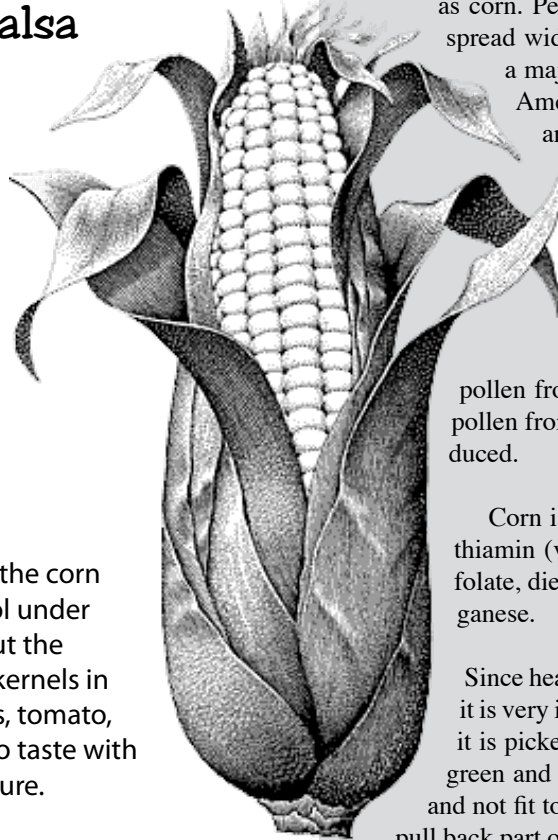
In a large pot of boiling water, cook the corn until just tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Cool under running water. With a sharp knife, cut the kernels off the cobs. Place the corn kernels in a large bowl. Mix in the onion, chiles, tomato, cilantro, oil, and lime juice. Season to taste with salt. Serve cold or at room temperature.  
*Makes 3 cups.*

## Corn Pancakes

- 1-1/4 cups flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 eggs beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 2 TBS vegetable oil
- 2 cups whole-kernel corn, cooked & cut off the cob

Sift the dry ingredients together. In a separate bowl combine the eggs, milk and oil, then mix together with the dry ingredients. Stir in the corn. Do not overmix. Spoon the batter into a preheated, lightly greased griddle or frying pan.  
*Makes 12 medium pancakes.*

Serving suggestions:  
Serve the pancakes with honey or maple syrup.  
Or: Add savoury herbs such as thyme or parsley, and finely diced red and green peppers to batter then serve pancakes with 1 cup of sour cream or yogurt mixed with a couple of tablespoonfuls of herbs, chipotle or jalapeno peppers & citrus juice



## featured this week: CORN

Maize (*Zea mays*), also known as corn, is a cereal grain that was first domesticated from 7,500 to 12,000 years ago in central Mexico though that plant was very different from what we now know as corn. Perhaps as early as 1500 BC, maize began to spread widely and rapidly and was the staple food, or a major staple, of most the pre-Columbian North American, Mesoamerican, South American, and Caribbean cultures. It spread to the rest of the world after European contact with the Americas in the late 15th century and early 16th century.

The ears are actually female flowers and the corn silks are the stigmas --the female plant part that gets pollinated by pollen from the male tassels. For each silk on which pollen from the tassels lands, one kernel of corn is produced.

Corn is a good source of many nutrients including thiamin (vitamin B1), pantothenic acid (vitamin B5), folate, dietary fiber, vitamin C, phosphorous and manganese.

Since heat rapidly converts the sugar in corn to starch, it is very important to keep corn refrigerated as soon as it is picked. Look for corn whose husks are fresh and green and not dried out. They should envelope the ear and not fit too loosely around it. To examine the kernels, pull back part of the husk. The kernels should be plump and tightly arranged in rows. You can test for the juiciness of the corn by taking your fingernail and pressing on a kernel. Corn that is fresh will exude a white milky substance.

Store corn in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Do not remove its husk since this will protect its flavor. To enjoy its optimal sweetness, corn should be eaten as soon as possible.

Fresh corn freezes well if placed in heavy-duty freezer bags. To prepare whole ears for freezing, blanch them first for seven to eleven minutes depending upon their size (larger ears take a longer time to blanch than smaller ones). If you just want to freeze the kernels, first blanch the ears for about five minutes and then cut the kernels off the cob at about three-quarters of their depths. Whole corn on the cob will keep for up to one year, while the kernels can be frozen for two to three months.

## DELIVERIES

for the week of: **August 28**  
orders are due 5 pm Tues. **August 21**

for the week of **Sept. 4**  
orders are due 5pm Tues. **August 28**



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