

Recipes by *Here & Now* Resident Chef Kathy Gunst

Breakfast Corn Fritters

Kathy's Note: If the idea of eating corn for breakfast strikes you as strange you haven't tried these fritters. A simple batter packed full of sweet, fresh corn, eggs, and milk is formed into small pancakes or fritters, and drizzled with maple syrup.

Makes about ten small fritters; serves 3 to 4.

Ingredients:

1/2 cup flour
Pinch salt
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 cup milk
1 to 2 tablespoons sugar*
1 large egg, lightly beaten
2 cups fresh corn kernels, cut off 2 large cobs
Vegetable or olive oil for the pan
Maple syrup

**If your corn is very fresh and sweet you won't need to add any sugar, but if the corn is frozen or not-just-picked you may want to sweeten it with the addition of some sugar.*

Instructions:

In a large bowl, sift the flour, salt, and baking powder. Add the milk and sugar if using and whisk until smooth. Beat in the egg and gently mix in the corn.

In a large skillet, heat about 3 tablespoons oil over moderately high heat. Drop 2 to 3 tablespoons batter into the hot oil and carefully flatten the mixture with the back of a spatula to form a pancake. Cook 2 to 3 minutes on each side, or until golden brown. Serve hot accompanied by the maple syrup.

Herb Corn Fritters

Kathy's Note: This is the savory version of the breakfast corn fritters, made with fresh herbs and served with a lemon-herb butter.

Makes about ten to twelve 2 ½ to 3-inch fritters; serves 4.

Ingredients:

2 large ears corn, shucked and kernels removed (about 1 ½ cups corn kernels)
1 large egg, whisked
½ cup flour

½ teaspoon baking powder
1/3 cup half and half
Pinch of salt, or to taste
A few grindings of black pepper
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil
1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
1 tablespoon melted butter, plus more for frying
Vegetable or olive oil for frying

Ingredients:

Place the corn kernels in a large bowl. Add the egg and mix well. Stir in the flour, baking powder, half and half, salt, pepper, parsley, basil, and chives. Add 1 tablespoon of the melted butter and beat well. The batter will be chunky, but should be evenly mixed.

Heat a large skillet or griddle over medium-high heat. Add the remaining melted butter and ½ tablespoon of the oil and allow it to get hot, about 1 to 2 minutes. Add heaping tablespoons of the corn batter to the pan and cook the fritters for 2 minutes. Using a spatula, gently flip the fritters and cook another 2 to 3 minutes on the other side, or until golden brown. Repeat with the remaining batter, adding more butter and oil to the pan as needed. Serve hot with the herb butter.

Lemon-Herb Butter

Ingredients/Instructions: Melt 1/2 stick lightly salted butter with 1 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil, and 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives. Simmer over low heat for 3 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice and 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest and freshly ground black pepper. Simmer 1 minute and drizzle the hot butter over the corn fritters.

Corn Stock

Ingredients/Instructions: Just as you can save the carcass of your turkey or chicken to make a broth, you can save those cobs of corn. When your cobs (also add the husks and the silk) are bare, cover them with water, salt well, a few peppercorns, an onion chopped and let simmer until the stock tastes like corn. It will be subtle but can be reduced (cooked down) to create a stronger broth. Season to taste and use corn stock in chowders, risottos, polenta and any dish you add fresh corn to.

Cutting Corn Off The Cob

Eating corn straight from the cob is one of the wonders of summer. But we also like to cut the kernels off the cob and use them to make muffins, bread, salads, sautés, soups and stews.

The basic method for removing corn kernels from the cob is simple: shuck the corn, removing the silky strands that line the inside of the husk. Hold the cob upright on a flat working surface. Use a large, sharp knife to cut down the side of the cob, in a kind of sawing motion, to remove the kernels from one side of the cob. Turn the cob and repeat until all the kernels are removed, being careful not to cut into the cob. Use the corn kernels as soon as possible.

An average ear of corn will yield about 1/2 to 3/4 cup corn kernels.

Corn and Sweet Potato Chowder with Saffron Cream

Kathy's Note: This chowder is a sensory explosion. First there's the color: the broth is a gorgeous rich sunflower yellow, thanks to the saffron, sweet potatoes, and golden yellow corn and peppers. Then there's the scent: the earthy aroma of corn and saffron. And, of course, the taste: rich, creamy, summery, and satisfying. Serve with biscuits, rolls, or crusty bread.

Serves 6.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
1 large red bell pepper, cut in 1/2-inch squares
1 small yellow bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch squares
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch squares (about 2 cups)
1 tablespoon flour
4 cups low-sodium canned chicken or vegetable broth, or homemade chicken broth
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 large ears fresh corn, or 3 cups frozen corn kernels, thawed
1 cup heavy cream
About 1 teaspoon crumbled saffron
3 scallions, white and green parts, finely chopped

Instructions:

In a large pot, heat the oil over low heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Add half of the red pepper, and all of the yellow pepper and cook, stirring for 2 minutes. Add the sweet potato and cook for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in the flour

and cook for 2 minutes. Raise the heat to high, stir in the broth, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook for about 12 minutes until the potatoes are just tender.

Meanwhile, if using fresh corn, shuck it and remove the silks. Using a sharp knife, remove the kernels from the cob by standing each cob on one end on a cutting board and working the knife straight down the cob; you should have about 3 cups of kernels. Remove the corn milk (see Milking The Cob on page 00) and mix in the kernels; set aside.

In a small saucepan, heat the cream and saffron over low heat for about 5 minutes, until just simmering.

Add the saffron cream to the chowder and stir in the corn. Heat over low heat for 5 minutes. Taste for seasoning. Serve piping hot, topped with the scallions and remaining red pepper.

Favorite Variation:

Sauté 3 slices thick cut bacon in the pan as the first step. Remove the bacon and keep 1 tablespoon bacon fat in the pan. Sauté the onions in the bacon fat instead of adding olive oil. Crumble the bacon into the soup just before serving.

Grilled Corn, Tomato, Feta and Mint Salad

Kathy's Note: Refreshing, summery and full of bright flavors, serve this as a salad on a bed of greens or as a topping for tacos, grilled fish, or burgers and sausages.

Serves 6-8.

Ingredients:

6 ears corn, shucked

About 1/3 cup plus, 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil for grilling the corn

Salt and pepper

2 large ripe tomatoes, cut into small cubes

4 ounces feta cheese, cut into small cubes or crumbled

2 tablespoon jalapeño or chile pepper, cored and chopped, with or without seeds depending on how spicy you like it

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

1/4 cup fresh mint, chopped

1/4 cup white wine vinegar

Light a grill until hot, about 400 degrees. Rub the corn in the oil and salt and pepper and grill for about 4 minutes on each side, or until the kernels are just charred. Remove and let cool. Using a sharp knife, cut the kernels off the cob into a large bowl.

Mix in the tomatoes, feta, pepper, garlic, mint, olive oil, vinegar, and, salt and pepper to taste. Gently stir and taste for seasoning.

Virginia Willis's Corn Spoon Bread

Kathy's Note: Spoon bread is more like custard than bread, and less like a casserole than a soufflé. As the name suggests, it's soft enough to eat with a spoon. Spoon bread is more common in Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky. Berea, Kentucky, in the south central portion of the state, actually boasts a spoon bread festival.

The key to this recipe is using very fine cornmeal for a smooth, creamy texture. If you are unable to find fine meal in the supermarket, try Mexican or South American groceries. Also, adding a bit of fresh corn when in season really makes this spoon bread delicious. Some recipes call for baking powder for lift, but in this recipe, with a nod to my French training, I use beaten egg whites.

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus more for the pan
2 cups whole milk
1 cup very fine yellow cornmeal
Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
Scraped kernels from 2 ears fresh sweet corn (about 1 cup)
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
2 large eggs, separated

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Butter an ovenproof casserole or round 2-quart soufflé mold.

To prepare the batter, in a medium saucepan, combine the milk and cornmeal over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, whisking rapidly and constantly, until very, very thick, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Transfer the mixture to a large bowl. Add the corn kernels, chives, and the 2 tablespoons melted butter. Season with salt and pepper and stir to combine. Add the egg yolks, one at a time, stirring after each addition.

To beat the egg whites, in a separate bowl, using a handheld mixer, beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt on high speed until stiff peaks form. Gently fold the egg whites into the warm cornmeal mixture.

Transfer the lightened cornmeal mixture to the prepared pan; smooth the surface with a spatula. Bake until puffed and risen and the inside is firm, but moist, and the top is golden brown, 35 to 40 minutes. Serve immediately while puffed and risen.

Virginia Willis is French-trained Southern chef and food writer.

Grilled Corn Relish

Kathy's Note: Serve this as a topping for burgers, sausages or as a salsa-like dip with chips and vegetables.

Makes about 2 cups

Ingredients:

4 ears fresh corn
1 red pepper
1 jalapeño pepper
3 scallions
1/4 cup fresh chopped cilantro
1/4 cup fresh lime juice
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon apple cider or white wine vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Instructions:

Heat grill to 400 degrees. Husk the corn and brush lightly with olive oil.

Place the corn, red pepper, and jalapeño directly on the heat. Grill corn and jalapeño 4 minutes on each side, until charred. Remove and let cool slightly.

Grill pepper for 5 minutes on each side, until charred. Remove and let cool slightly.

Cut the corn kernels off the cob and place in a bowl. Core the jalapeño and remove seeds or keep for a spicier relish and chop. Core the pepper and chop and add to corn. Add the scallions, cilantro, lime juice, olive oil, vinegar and salt and pepper to taste.