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Sweet-Corn Chowder with Bacon and Sweet-Corn Salsa

SERVES 6 (1 ½ CUPS CHOWDER AND 3 TABLESPOONS SALSA PER PERSON)

One of my proudest moments as a chef was being asked to participate in a Niman Ranch Farmer Appreciation Dinner in Iowa. I paired bacon with sweet corn to make this luscious summer chowder. I served it hot, but it can be enjoyed at room temperature or cold just as easily. —**George Formaro** CENTRO | DES MOINES, IA

SWEET-CORN SALSA

- 1 fresh poblano chile
- 2 large ears fresh sweet corn, kernels cut from the cob
- 1 large heirloom tomato (about ½ pound), seeded and chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped red onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ jalapeño chile, seeds and membrane removed, chopped

SWEET-CORN CHOWDER

- 4 cups chicken stock or vegetable stock
- 8 large ears sweet corn, kernels cut from cob (about 5 ½ cups)
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped (about ½ cup)
- 1 large clove garlic, chopped
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 ½ cups heavy cream
- 5 tablespoons cornstarch
- 5 tablespoons cold water
- Kosher salt and ground white pepper, to taste
- 10 slices bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled

WHERE TO FIND...

Sweet Corn

Grimes Sweet Corn
Granger, IA

Tomato

Cleverley Farms
Mingo, IA

Bacon

Niman Ranch
IA

TO MAKE THE SALSA

Preheat the broiler.

Place the poblano on a baking sheet and roast under the broiler for about 15 to 20 minutes. Using a pair of tongs, rotate the chile once the skin starts to blacken, about every 5 minutes. Remove from the oven, transfer to a bowl, cover with a dishtowel, and set aside to cool.

In a medium bowl, add the corn kernels, tomato, olive oil, onion, cilantro, salt, garlic, vinegar, black pepper, and jalapeño.

Once the poblano is cool to the touch, the blistered and blackened skin should pull off easily. Remove and discard the skin, seeds, and stem. Chop the poblano and add it to the bowl with the corn mixture. Stir, then refrigerate for 1 hour before serving.

TO MAKE THE CHOWDER

In a Dutch oven, bring the stock to a simmer over medium heat. Add the corn, onion, garlic, and thyme. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes.

Remove and discard the thyme. Purée approximately ½ of the chowder using an immersion blender, or in batches if using a blender, returning the puréed portion to the Dutch oven. Add the cream and bring the chowder to a simmer over low heat.

Mix the cornstarch and cold water together in a small cup, then add this mixture to the chowder while it is simmering. Stir to thicken. Season to taste with the salt and white pepper.

To serve, divide the chowder among bowls. Top each bowl with some of the corn salsa and crumbled bacon.

Note: Hot chilies like jalapeños and poblanos have oils that can remain on the skin even after washing. To prevent irritation, wear gloves or put a plastic bag over whichever hand is holding the chile.