



MAIZE OR CORN

Holistic Culinary Art

Botanical name: *Zea mays*;
English: *Maize*; Hindi, Oriya:
Maka; Bengali, Marathi.: *Bhutta*;
Punjabi, Gujarati: *Makai*; Kannada:
Musikinu jola, Tamil: *Makka Cholam*;
Malayalam *Cholam*; Telugu: *Mokka
jonnalu*

Maize, also known as corn, is a large grain plant farmed since pre-historic times. The leafy stalk of the corn plant produces ears with grain or seeds called kernels. Maize kernels are often used in cooking as a starch. The six major types of maize are dent, flint, pod, popcorn, flour and sweet.

Maize spread to the rest of the world because it was cultivable in different kinds of climates. Sugar-rich sweet corn is grown for human consumption as kernels. Field corn varieties are used for animal feed and for grinding into cornmeal, pressing into corn oil and fermentation and distillation into alcoholic beverages and as chemical

feedstocks. Traditionally corn, beans and squash called the three sisters are planted together in the Americas. This helps to make the soil fertile and provides a holistic nutritional profile.

While corn is usually golden-yellow in colour, there are other varieties, such as pink, purple, red, blue and black. Corn is eaten on or off the cob, cooked into a thick porridge, as grits, polenta or stuffed into tamales, rotis, in salads, etc. Chips and popcorn are the other well-known uses.

Corn is a good source of B vitamins consisting of thiamin, niacin, pantothenic acid (B5) and folate. In moderate amounts corn provides dietary fibre and essential minerals, such as magnesium and phosphorus.

Starch from maize is being used to make plastics, fabrics, adhesives and other chemical products. Chrysanthemin is found in purple corn and is used as a food colouring.

Corn is useful as bio-fuel and "feed maize" is increasingly being used for heating in the west. Specialised corn stoves are now available. Maize cobs are

also used as a biomass fuel source. Maize is now being used as a feedstock for the production of ethanol fuel.

Maize has many uses in cooking. It is a staple food in many countries. Flour is made out of yellow dried corn and is eaten as cornmeal. Cornflour or cornstarch is another kind of flour that is white and is used as a thickening agent in sauces.

In Punjab, *Makai ki roti* and *sarson ka saag*—corn meal rotis and mustard leaf mash are commonly served in the winter months with dollops of ghee and gur (molasses). All this helps to create warmth in the body. Shortbread cookies are made by combining cornstarch, regular flour and butter.

In *Ayurveda* corn in the diet helps to reduce water retention and blood pressure. Corn contains lots of potassium. As a diuretic, it reduces water retention and counteracts the action of sodium in the body. Corn is very useful for people with high blood pressure. The best form of corn for *kapha* is popcorn because popcorn's dryness absorbs excess *kapha* fluids in the stomach.

Cardiovascular Benefits

Corn's rich insoluble fibre along with its protein content helps to slow down the rise of blood sugar following a meal.

Makai Ki Kheer Corn Kernel Milk Pudding

Ingredients

Sweet Corn 1 cup

Milk 1 litre

Rice soaked in enough water
to cover it 2 teaspoons

Saffron (kesar) Few strands

Cardamom powder $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon

Almonds slivered finely 10

Pistachios chopped 10

Ghee $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp

Sugar $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

1. Grind sweet corn kernels coarsely with a little water or milk. Cook this paste separately in a heavy bottom saucepan with the sugar stirring continuously till sugar is dissolved and the corn is cooked.

2. Blend the rice coarsely with the water you soaked it in.

3. Heat milk in a deep non-stick pan. Add the coarsely blended rice to the milk and mix.

thoroughly. Cook, stirring frequently until milk reduces to $\frac{2}{3}$ of original quantity.

4. Add saffron and cardamom powder to the pan, mix and cook till the rice is done.

5. Add corn and sugar mix paste and stir the *kheer* thoroughly. Cook till the *kheer* thickens.

6. Heat the ghee in a saucepan and lightly toast the almonds and pistachios.

7. Cool the *kheer* and serve garnished with pistachios and almonds.



Corn Cutlets

Ingredients

Boiled sweet corn kernels
(*makai ka dana*) 4 tsp
Potatoes, boiled and mashed 2
Bread slices 3
Finely sliced onions 2 tbsp
Garam masala powder ½ tsp
Grated ginger 2 tsp
Green chilli paste ½ tsp
Finely chopped coriander
leaves 2 tsp
Salt 1 tsp
Oil for shallow frying each
cutlet 1 tsp

Method

1. Mix all the ingredients except the oil.
2. Knead well to form stiff dough. Make eight balls.

3. Gently flatten with your palm each cutlet to 1/2 inch thickness.

4. Heat a griddle or shallow saucepan. Brush with oil lightly.

5. If possible, place all the cutlets in the griddle or sauté in two batches.

6. Keep regularly flipping over the cutlets and cooking them till each one browns lightly on both sides. Apply more oil if required while cooking the cutlets.

7. Serve hot with mint or sweet and sour chutney 🍽️

padmininatarajan@gmail.com

Padmini Natarajan

