

inviting ideas

Time to be corny about tomatoes



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I've always loved fresh tomatoes and things made from them. I may not be quite as passionate about corn as I am tomatoes, but it's close, once it is factored in with my fondness for potatoes.

A few weeks ago, a friend of mine brought me twelve ears of corn - specifically, Peaches and Cream Corn.

My husband David and I each ate 6 ears in one sitting - it was our entire meal, and was it good - cooked just the way we like it; boiled to perfection in a milk and water mixture, with a bit of sugar added to the liquid, drained, rolled in butter, and sprinkled with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Wonderful summer dishes can be made using fresh tomatoes; a stuffed whole (raw) tomato - loaded with chicken, shrimp, crab or tuna salad, freshly

made spicy salsa, broiled tomatoes, topped with Asiago or Parmesan cheese, layered crostini with a slice of tomato, fresh mozzarella and a basil leaf.

Corn has its own repertoire of culinary delights; corn bread with added corn kernels, cream of corn soup with real, not canned corn, corn salsa, corn chowder, corn relish, corn fritters made with whole kernels of corn and served with maple syrup.

BROILED FRESH TOMATO SOUP WITH CHÈVRE CHEESE

Yield: 10-12 servings

- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 cups leeks (white parts only), thinly sliced
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons fresh basil, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons fresh dill, finely chopped
- 18 ripe tomatoes, peeled and cut into

- medium chunks
- 6 tablespoons tomato paste
- 8 cups chicken stock (homemade or prepared)
- 3 teaspoons sea salt (or to taste)
- Dash of cayenne pepper
- 4-5 teaspoons sugar
- Chèvre cheese
- Whole fresh basil leaves for garnish

Heat large stock pot with butter (margarine) and oil. Add sliced leeks and cook until soft. Add the thyme, basil and dill - sauté for one minute.

Add tomatoes and tomato paste and simmer for 12 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add chicken stock and let soup come to just below a boil - reduce heat and simmer for one half hour, stirring occasionally.

Remove soup in small batches and place in a blender or food processor fitted with a steel blade - process until smooth.

When all the soup has been processed, return to heat and add salt (to taste), pepper (to taste) and sugar. Cook over low heat until the soup is warm.

Preheat broiler - place the soup in individual oven-proof bowls and dollop with desired amount of chèvre cheese.

Place bowls under broiler (6-8 inches from heat source) for approximately one minute or until cheese has a lightly browned top. Garnish with whole fresh basil leaves.

Serve for a luncheon or light dinner - with sourdough baguettes and a fresh deep green spinach salad. For hearty eaters, use this rich soup as the perfect first course.

ROASTED CORN SALSA WITH CILANTRO & MINT

- Yield: 3 1/2 - 4 cups
- 6 ears of corn (husk removed)
 - 2 1/2 tablespoons light olive oil

- 2 red bell peppers
- 2 poblano chiles
- 1 - 2 jalapeno peppers
- 6 sun-dried tomatoes (packaged in olive oil) cut into 1/4 inch dice
- 1 cup assorted wild mushrooms, cut into 1/4 inch dice
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped
- Salt (a pinch or to taste)
- Sugar (a pinch or to taste)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, finely chopped

Heat an out-door grill (use hard wood as a fuel source).

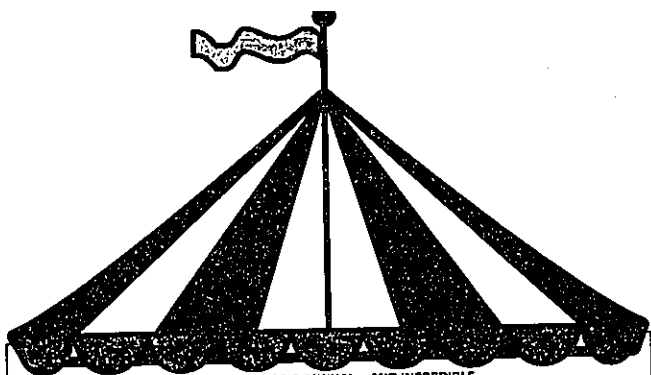
Brush washed and dried ears of corn with light olive oil. Place on heated grill and cook until nicely browned. Remove corn and let cool.

Grill all peppers until charred - remove and place in a glass container, cover with plastic wrap (let peppers sweat - for approximately 20 minutes). When cool enough to handle, peel, remove stems and seeds and cut into 1/4-inch dice. Set aside.

Sauté the mushrooms and the garlic in the remaining olive oil - continue to cook over medium heat until lightly browned. Set aside.

Carefully cut the cooled corn from the cob - removing only the kernels and place into a large bowl - add the sun-dried tomatoes, peppers, mushrooms, garlic, mint, salt and sugar (to taste). Let mixture stand for approximately one hour to allow flavors to blend. Add cilantro and wait an additional 15-20 minutes and serve.

Corn salsa makes a great accompaniment to meat, poultry or cheese. Serve as a relish or on top of a softened (cream) cheese as an appetizer.



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HINT: Generously speaking, frameless cabinets require somewhat more time and expense to install.

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