

# Health Benefits of Maize/Corn



Maize is a tall cereal grass originally domesticated in Mexico, bred for its long ears of starchy seeds commonly known as corn. It is the most-produced cereal grain in the world, with at least 50 varieties of different colors, textures, shapes and sizes. White and yellow are the most common varieties in the US. Despite commonly-used terminology, maize/corn is a grain, not a vegetable.



Maize includes sweet corn, baby corn, popcorn and Indian corn which is a variety of colors. Indian corn is less sweet than yellow corn, and often used for decoration.

Maize/corn is an important staple food for South Americans, Africans and Native Americans. Maize/corn sustains indigenous people spiritually, physically, and economically. It shapes daily meals, and is tied to growing seasons, festivals and food security. It was easily stored and could also be used for making mats, baskets and dolls.

## WHAT MAKES MAIZE/CORN GREAT?

### **Nutrition**

1/2 cup cooked maize/corn provides 98 calories, 3 gm protein, 2 gm fiber, <1 gm fat and no cholesterol.

### **Vitamins**

Maize/corn is an excellent source of antioxidants vitamin A, lutein and zeaxanthin which promote healthy vision and fight infections. It also contains phytosterols and CoQ10 which can help lower cholesterol and risk of heart damage. Purple and blue varieties contain anthocyanins, another antioxidant that lowers blood pressure and risk of heart disease and cancer.

### **Minerals**

Maize/corn also contains potassium important for healthy blood pressure, magnesium for heart health and calcium for strong bones.

### **Fiber**

Maize/corn is a good source of insoluble fiber, which aids in reducing constipation, hemorrhoids and risk of colorectal cancer. Fiber also feeds our healthy gut microbiome.

## BUYING & USING MAIZE/CORN

Maize/corn comes into season in early to mid-summer and continues into early fall. Once harvested, the sugar in corn kernels begins to convert to starch, losing its sweetness. Corn should be consumed soon after harvesting.

Corn on the cob can be boiled, steamed, grilled or roasted. Kernels can be cut off the cob and prepared the same way, or mixed with vegetables, in salads, soups, stews or relishes. Sweet corn can be found fresh, frozen, canned or creamed.

Baby corn is commonly used in stir fries or mixed with vegetables. It can also be tossed into salads or pickled. In the US, baby corn is usually found canned or frozen.

Corn can be slightly ground into corn meal, commonly used for making polenta, or corn porridge. Or it can be ground more finely into flour for making bread, muffins and pancake mixes. Ground dried corn treated with lye or pickling lime is used to masa, the dough for making tortillas and tamales. The process of converting flour into masa helps the body absorb niacin and prevents the skin disease, pellagra. Masa also contains more fiber and more calories than cornmeal.

Note, cornmeal and masa cannot be interchanged in recipes.

### **Did you know?**

Corn can also be used in the making of toilet paper, drywall, toothpaste, crayons, hand soap and fireworks.



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## Corn Salsa Simple-veganista.com

### Ingredients:

4 ears (4 c) sweet corn  
1 red bell pepper, diced  
1 jalapeno, diced  
2 limes, juiced

### Optional:

¼ to ½ chili powder  
Dash of cumin  
1 avocado

### Instructions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Season to taste with chili powder, cumin and salt to taste.
2. Optional add ins: Mashed avocado for creaminess, rinsed, canned black beans for added protein

## Easy Polenta minimalistbaker.com

### Ingredients:

1 cup corn polenta or grits  
4 cups water  
¾ tsp salt

### Optional:

1-2 Tbsp margarine  
Raw spinach or kale  
Sautéed veggies  
Roasted garlic  
Maple syrup

### Instructions:

1. In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil.
2. Turn heat to medium and add salt.
3. Using a whisk, very slowly and continuously, add polenta, to avoid lumps.
4. Continue whisking until mixture begins to thicken, about 2 minutes. Then turn the heat to low and cover.
5. Simmer 30 minutes, whisking every 5 minutes to avoid sticking.
6. When desired consistency, remove from heat and add optional ingredients.

## Cornbread, Cornpone or Hoe-cake Ocala.com and theveganeskimo.com

### Ingredients:

1 cup cornmeal  
1 cup buttermilk,  
almond milk or soymilk  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
1 Tbsp margarine, butter or oil

### Optional:

1 egg added to batter  
canned or frozen sweet corn  
chopped red bell pepper  
chopped jalapeño pepper

### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 450°F.
2. Melt margarine or butter in 9" cast iron skillet or pan
3. Mix dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add egg, milk and optional ingredients as desired.
4. Pour batter into skillet or pan and mix well.
5. Bake 30-40 minutes until cornbread is browned.
6. Batter can also be used to make pancakes or hoe-cakes and top with fresh fruit.

## Black Bean and Corn Salad wellplated.com

### Ingredients:

1 14-oz can black beans, rinsed, drained  
2 ears fresh corn or 1½ cups frozen, thawed  
1 pt cherry or grape tomatoes, halved  
½ cup fresh basil, parsley or cilantro, chopped

### Dressing:

2 Tbsp lime juice and 2 Tbsp olive oil  
1 clove garlic, chopped (optional)

### Instructions:

Put all salad ingredients in a large bowl. Pour dressing and stir. Refrigerate 15 minutes before serving.

## REFERENCES

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