

# Sweet corn

Go off the cob for a rewarding experience

By **EMILY McFAUL**  
ftimes@ftimes.com

**F**resh sweet corn offers a quintessential taste of summer — and going beyond corn on the cob can be a rewarding experience.

"I like to use it as much as possible," says Chef Suzanne Stack, who has featured fresh sweet corn for the past two weeks at her Lodi restaurant, Suzanne Fine Regional Cuisine. "It's been absolutely delicious. I think we're going to have a great season."

One of Stack's favorite summer starters is a soup made from fresh corn and sweet Walla Walla onions cooked together in a homemade stock. After pureeing the mixture, Stack adds fresh scallions and sweet, tender shrimp that's lightly roasted in the oven with olive oil, salt and pepper.

"It's a beautiful soup," Stack said. "It just reeks of beautiful sweet corn, and it's a great starter for a three-course dinner."

Stack is now planning a dish of corn cakes made with roasted sweet corn, cornmeal, cream and eggs, topped with an applewood-smoked salmon salad and garnished with crème fraîche and chives.

"Salmon and corn just go very, very well together," she said.

Suzanne's current menu features an organic Shetland salmon served with a corn salsa and fresh local vegetables finished with a garden-fresh basil sauce, as well as a potato gnocchi made with fresh corn, chanterelle mushrooms and peas in a light cream sauce.

Stack's salsa, made with tomatoes, onions, jalapenos and a lemon vinaigrette, uses sweet corn cut from the kernel and roasted in the oven with olive oil, salt and pepper — a technique Stack favors to preserve the corn's flavor.

"I tend to roast corn or sauté it very lightly," she said. "I very rarely submerge it in water."

Covering the ears of corn with water and boiling them until the water changes color does result in diminished taste, agrees Pat Ayres of Fresh Ayr Farms in Shortsville.

"The sugar is in the water, and you're

eating what's left over," Ayres said of boiling corn. "By steaming the corn, you're locking in the sugars."

Ayres herself prefers standing ears of corn upright in a large pan with an inch or so of water, then steaming the corn until the color changes from a dull to a sparkling yellow and the ears have no condensation on them. Fresh ears of corn can also be baked in the oven, grilled — even microwaved.

When cutting corn from the cob for later use, taking the extra step of plunging cooked ears of corn into icy water for several minutes will help to halt the process of sugars turning to starch, Ayres said.

And, she adds, freshness matters when preparing sweet corn. Ripping the husk to check for pests or full, ripe kernels will shorten the corn's lifespan.

"The sugar starts to turn into starch," explains Ayres, noting that most of her loyal customers have her select healthy, ripe ears of corn for them by feel.

And while customers can opt to husk their corn right at the Fresh Ayr Farm Market in Shortsville or at the Ayres' stand at Canandaigua's

Saturday



Susan Clark Porter /  
Finger Lakes Times

## Corn Chowder

(Featured in July 2005 Gourmet Magazine — adapted from Suzanne Fine Regional Cuisine in Lodi)

- 1/2 cup diced slab bacon (about 2 oz.)
- 2 cups diced sweet onion, such as Vidalia
- 2 large carrots (about 1 cup)
- 1 celery rib, diced (about 3/4 cup)
- 1 red bell pepper, diced (about 1 cup)
- 1/2 lb. yellow-fleshed potatoes such as Yukon Gold (2 small), peeled and dice
- 1/2 lb. sweet potato (1 medium), peeled and diced
- 5 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 fresh thyme sprigs
- 3 cups corn (from about 6 ears)
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 tsp. fine sea salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- Garnish: 2 plum tomatoes, seeded and diced; finely chopped fresh chives

Cook bacon in a wide 6- to 8-quart heavy pot over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until crisp, about five minutes. Transfer with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain, then add onion, carrots, celery, and bell pepper to bacon fat and cook, stirring, until onion is softened, 8 to 10 minutes.

Add all potatoes, broth, and thyme and simmer, covered, until potatoes are just tender, about 15 minutes. Add corn and cream and simmer, uncovered, 10 minutes. Add sea salt and pepper, then stir in bacon.

morning Farmers Market, Ayres warns that husking corn in the morning that won't be prepared until dinnertime does affect taste.

"It's not going to be as fresh and sweet as it would have been," she said.

Still, Ayres notes that newer breeds of "sugar-enhanced" corn have been engineered to slow the process of sugar turning to starch.

"Supersweet" varieties last even longer, especially when kept in the refrigerator with the husks intact.

"Depending on how you care for your corn, you'll get a lot of mileage out of a dozen ears," said Ayres.

But supersweet corn isn't a foolproof choice — cooks who use the variety in chowder may be disappointed.

"It will taste like you poured a cup of sugar in there," she said. "Supersweet corn does pack a wallop with sweetness.

The tradeoff is that the kernels are a little crunchier."

Ayres expects to enjoy sweet corn throughout the summer, with Fresh Ayr's harvest beginning a few days ago and expected to continue to Labor Day weekend.

Ayres herself likes to prepare burgers and fresh sweet corn on

the grill, throwing on a few extra ears for a grilled corn, black bean and tomato salad that serves as the following night's dinner.

"It almost makes a main entrée all by itself," she said.



## Pick of the Week

Magnus Ridge Pinot Noir 2007



Lorraine Hems

**Why it's worth trying:** You may be looking for something with a little less body this time of year ... and that could apply to wearing a bikini or a wine! This wine fits the bill because it is lighter in body, but certainly not in flavor.

This dry red wine spent two years in a French oak that didn't overwhelm the red fruit aromas and raspberry and cherry flavors. There is also vanilla and spice, adding to the pleasure of this silky wine. The acidity you would expect from this grape makes it a wine that will brighten the flavors of your food, and this pinot noir is ready to enjoy now without long-term aging.

**Price:** \$20

**Serving tips:** You could place this in the fridge for about 20 minutes before serving, depending on the storage temperature and how hot it is where you will be drinking the wine. You may want to keep an ice bucket handy if it is sitting outside for too long. The slight chill will keep the alcohol and flavors in balance, as well as bringing out the beautiful fruit.

**Food pairing:** This is truly a pasta and cheese-loving wine and is recommended with poultry and pork, too, but I enjoyed a glass on its own. Experiment!

**You might also want to try:** Look for other lighter-bodied reds that could even be a little off dry to go with some of the sweeter sauces and marinades during the grilling season.

**Where to buy it:** You may not have heard of this winery yet, but you can't miss the stately building on Seneca Lake's southwest side. This is the best place to purchase the wines right now. Magnus Ridge hasn't had an official "grand opening," but you should stop in to try their wines. And come hungry. Chef Bill Cornelius, familiar to many Finger Lakes foodies, is at it again with his tasty creations in the winery's Waterlilies Cafe. For more information, visit [www.magnusridge.com](http://www.magnusridge.com).

## Grilled Corn, Black Bean and Tomato Salad

- 2 cups grilled sweet corn kernels
- 4 large ripe tomatoes, chopped
- (1) 15 oz. can black beans, drained
- 1 med. green or red pepper, diced
- 1/2 cup shredded fresh basil or cilantro
- 2 Tbsp. each balsamic vinegar & olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 - 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper or hot sauce

Combine the first five ingredients in a large bowl. Combine remaining ingredients in a screw-top jar, shake well and toss with corn mixture. Chill several hours for best flavor. May be served as a salad, salsa, a dip with tortilla chips or tossed into cooked rice or pasta.

**MOONLIGHT STROLL  
MUSIC SERIES**

FRIDAY NIGHTS 8-10 PM

The Gardens are aglow again!  
• Horse & Carriage Rides • Wine-by-the-Glass  
• Mansion Tours


**PERFORMANCES**

By:

July 29 -  
**Angelicus  
String  
Quartet**

\$9/adults, \$7/members,  
\$4/Youth 6-17,  
kids under 5 are free.

This organization is supported in part with public funds from the NY State Council on the Arts Decentralization Program, which is administered locally by Phelps Art Center.



151 Charlotte Street  
Canandaigua  
For more info, call  
(585) 394-4922  
or visit [www.sonnenberg.org](http://www.sonnenberg.org)

## McGregor celebrating its 40th anniversary

The following is a partial listing of upcoming wine and culinary events. Events may be e-mailed to Amanda Folts at [afolts@ftimes.com](mailto:afolts@ftimes.com). To register for events at the New York Wine and Culinary Center in Canandaigua, visit [www.nywcc.com](http://www.nywcc.com).

**Seasonal Chef Demo with Wine and Beer Pairing — Lunch and Learn**, with Erica Little and Chuck France, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. July 25 at NYWCC. \$30.

**Know Your Faults: Sensory Analysis of Wine Flaws, a one-day workshop**, with Shannon Brock and Anna Katharine Mansfield, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. July 27 at NYWCC. \$115.

**Grapehound Wine Tour**, Atwater Estate Vineyards, July 27 to 30, 5055 Route 414, Burdett.

**Wine Pairing Dinner**, Glenora Wine Cellars, featuring Autumn's Harvest farm, 6 p.m. July 28, 5435 Route 14, Dundee. \$60.

**Backyard BBQ**, 5:30 to 9 p.m. July 28 at NYWCC. \$12.

**Second Annual Sampling Soiree**, JD Wine Cellars, 5 to 7 p.m. July 29, 1342 Eddy Road, Macedon.

**New York Steakhouse**, with Eric K. Smith, 6 to 8:30 p.m. July 29 at NYWCC. \$75.

**Summertime Wine and Food Pairing**, with Erica Little, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. July 30 at NYWCC. \$25.

**Understanding Red Wines**, with Cheryl Pitti, 3 to 5 p.m. July 30 at NYWCC. \$40.

**40th Anniversary Celebration**, McGregor Vineyard, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. July 30, 5503 Dutch St.,

Dundee. 800-272-0192 or [www.mcgregorwinery.com](http://www.mcgregorwinery.com) for more information.

**Alta B Weekend**, Wagner Vineyard, July 30 and 31, 9322 Route 414, Lodi.

**Fresh from the Canandaigua Farmers Market**, with Jeff Christiano, 9 a.m. to noon July 30 at NYWCC. \$50.

**From Farm to Friends — The CSA Way**, 6 to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 1 with Jeff Christiano at NYWCC. \$25.

**Summer Winemaker's Dinner**, Casa Larga, 6:30 p.m. Aug. 4, 2287 Turk Hill Road, Fairport. Call (585) 223-4210 for pricing.

**Wine and Barbecue Pairing**, with Ted Ganster, 3 to 4 p.m. Aug. 5 at NYWCC. \$30.

**Wine and Cheese Pairing**, with Ted Ganster, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Aug. 6 at NYWCC. \$20.

**Knife Skills Workshop**, 2 to 3:30 p.m. Aug. 6 at NYWCC. \$40.

**Fresh from the Canandaigua Farmers Market**, with Jeff Christiano, 9 a.m. to noon Aug. 6 at NYWCC. \$50.

**Jack Ass Day**, Swedisch Hill Winery, noon to 5 p.m. Aug. 6, 4565 Route 414, Romulus.

**Wine Club Appreciation Party**, Sheldrake Point, 5 to 9 p.m. Aug. 6, 7448 County Road 153, Ovid. \$20 per Wine Club member, to join visit [www.sheldrakepoint.com](http://www.sheldrakepoint.com) or call wine club manager Antoinette at (607) 532-9401 ext. 106.

**Canandaigua Wine Walk**, Aug. 6, downtown Canandaigua, [www.downtowncanandaigua.com](http://www.downtowncanandaigua.com) or (585) 396-0300.

**Garlic Festival**, Fox Run Vineyards, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 6 and 7, 6770 Route 14, Penn Yan.

**Brunch Bunch**, noon to 2 p.m. Aug. 7 at NYWCC. \$40.

**Healthy Hearts Winemaker's Dinner**, Six Mile Creek Vineyard, 6:30 p.m. Aug. 7, 1551 Slaterville Road, Ithaca. \$45, call (800) 260-0612 for reservations.

**Wine 101**, with Noel Uzemack, 2 to 4 p.m. Aug. 7 at NYWCC. \$40.

— Amanda Folts

### These people are all host parents in the Treatment Foster Care Program at Cayuga Home for Children

#### What does that mean?

It means they have big hearts, and they have opened their doors to an adolescent between the ages of 12 and 17 who needs some help in a safe, supportive home environment.

#### Be a mentor. Become a host parent.

We offer training, 24-hour support, and monthly tax-free compensation of more than \$1,500.

Email Chris Schell at [hostakid@cayugahome.org](mailto:hostakid@cayugahome.org) or call 253-5383 ext. 312



A BIG HEART & A SAFE HOME ALL DAY & NIGHT

Cayuga Home for Children