

# The Curve

## ***EAT SWEETCORN!***

A just-boiled corn on the cob, speckled with freshly milled black pepper and rolled in melted butter is simply one of the greatest eating experiences available. Tinned or frozen sweetcorn can be tasty enough, but it doesn't compare to corn eaten straight from the cob, slathered with butter, when the crisp and succulent kernels explode with flavour in the mouth. There's no other food that regularly leaves us with burnt mouths because we can't wait for it to reach a reasonable temperature before tucking in.

**HISTORY** - Sweetcorn is a form of maize that has been cultivated since the nineteenth century. Maize (known as corn in the USA and elsewhere) has been an important foodstuff for thousands of years. It was eaten by Mexican and central American cultures as early as 3,400 B.C. and fuelled the Aztec Empire as well as the Mayan and the Inca civilizations.

It is widely thought that the Spanish brought maize back to Europe in the fifteenth century from where it then spread to east Asia and Africa. However this view does not go unchallenged and there is some evidence in support of an alternate theory (with far-reaching consequences for historians) that maize actually spread west from the Americas to Asia before it spread eastwards from Europe. Sweetcorn gathered popularity in the UK after World War II and is now grown extensively across southern England.

**BIOLOGY** - Sweetcorn, a grass, is a form of the cereal crop maize (*Zea mays*), harvested at a young age while the kernels are tender and sweet. A corn ear is an inflorescence (cluster of flowers around a stem) and the kernels are the fruit of the plant (more specifically a grain).

### **TIPS:**

**BUYING** - Look for cobs with the husk intact. The husk should be green and fresh and conceal fine, silky threads. Kernels should be tightly packed, plump and smaller at the tips than in the middle (indicating young cobs). If buying from a market try to shop earlier in the day and avoid buying sweetcorn that has been sitting in warm sun - the rate at which the sugars are turned to starch increases rapidly with temperature.

**COOKING** - Scan the QR code below with your smartphone to view and download the recipe for 'Cordbread'.

