



# Mexican Corn Salad (Esquites)

## WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Our Mexican Corn Salad features charred kernels whose nutty, slightly bitter flavor complements corn's natural sweetness. We achieved that charring on the stovetop by cooking kernels in a small amount of oil in a covered skillet. The kernels in contact with the skillet's surface browned and charred, and the lid prevented the kernels from popping out of the hot skillet and trapped steam, which helped cook the corn. We cooked the corn in two batches to allow more kernels to make contact with the skillet and brown. After cooking the corn, we used the hot skillet to bloom chili powder and lightly cook minced garlic to temper its bite. We dressed the salad with a creamy and tangy mixture of sour cream, mayonnaise, and lime juice. Letting the corn cool before adding chopped cilantro and spicy serrano chiles preserved their bright colors and fresh flavors.



### INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons lime juice, plus extra for seasoning (2 limes)
- 3 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise

### INSTRUCTIONS

If desired, substitute plain Greek yogurt for the sour cream. We like serrano chiles here, but you can substitute a jalapeño chile that has been halved lengthwise and sliced into 1⁄8-inch-thick half-moons. Adjust the amount of chiles to suit your taste. If cotija cheese is unavailable, substitute feta cheese.

1. Combine lime juice, sour cream, mayonnaise, serrano(s), and ¼ teaspoon salt in large bowl. Set aside.

### SERVES 6 TO 8

- 1-2** serrano chiles,  
stemmed and cut into  
 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick rings
- Salt
- 2** tablespoons plus 1  
teaspoon vegetable  
oil
- 6** ears corn, kernels cut  
from cobs (6 cups)
- 2** garlic cloves, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon chili powder
- 4** ounces cotija cheese,  
crumbled (1 cup)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup coarsely chopped  
fresh cilantro leaves
- 3** scallions, sliced thin

**2.** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over high heat until shimmering. Add half of corn and spread into even layer. Sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt. Cover and cook, without stirring, until corn touching skillet is charred, about 3 minutes. Remove skillet from heat and let stand, covered, for 15 seconds, until any popping subsides. Transfer corn to bowl with sour cream mixture. Repeat with 1 tablespoon oil,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt, and remaining corn.

**3.** Return now-empty skillet to medium heat and add remaining 1 teaspoon oil, garlic, and chili powder. Cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer garlic mixture to bowl with corn mixture and toss to combine. Let cool for at least 15 minutes.

**4.** Add cotija, cilantro, and scallions and toss to combine. Season salad with salt and up to 1 tablespoon extra lime juice to taste. Serve.

## A Neat Way to Cut Corn



The most common method of cutting corn from the cob involves standing the corn up vertically, which causes the kernels to scatter. Here's an alternative that keeps the kernels more contained:

**1.** Stand corn vertically and remove strip by slicing downward. Place corn horizontally on cut side.

**2.** Use narrower front third of chef's knife to slice downward along cob and remove kernels. With less distance to fall, kernels don't scatter as far.