

Farmers Market: Sweet corn

Cool factor gives corn flavor boost

Every other Wednesday throughout the summer, Savor offers a taste of something awaiting you at the Farmers Market. The market is every Saturday morning.

BY JOEL GEHRINGER
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Sweet corn from Daniels Produce isn't hard to find.

It's all over Nebraska, in fact.

In any Supersaver or Russ's Market across the state, Daniels sweet corn is on the shelves.

Andy and Tannie Daniels, owners of Daniels Produce in Columbus, ship their corn to supermarkets three times a week to ensure freshness.

But even though the sweet corn on store shelves is only days old, the corn they sell from their tent at the north end of the Farmers Market is pulled off the stalks just 12 to 24 hours before.

It seems fast, but the Danielses have the process down after 20 years of growing.

"We started off farming corn and soybean, but due to some flooding in '83-'84, we were unable to plant any crops," Tannie Daniels said.

The floods led the couple to plant new crops, including sweet corn, which became the farm's largest and most popular product.

At \$4 per dozen ears, the Danielses know

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More corn recipes.

how to get customers high-quality corn, and they know how to make it available early, too.

Andy Daniels said the techniques he used this year allowed him to start selling sweet corn a few weeks before most farmers.

"I planted 38 acres through plastic," he said. "It makes the soil about 30 degrees warmer and protects against freezing."

It also helps his plants germinate and develop earlier.

"If you can raise a vegetable before anyone else, that's the key," he said.

But selling corn early is pointless if flavor can't be guaranteed. That's where the Danielses' secret weapon come into play—the one that makes stores across the state stock their corn.

In the short period of time between being pulled off the stalk and being placed in a customer's hand, Daniels sweet corn goes through a "chilling" process.

Andy Daniels said he is the only farmer in Nebraska who hydrocools his sweet corn. Within half an hour of picking, his corn is submerged in chlorinated ice water to kill bacteria

ROAST CORN ON THE GRILL

Select tender young sweet corn. Remove large outer husks. Turn back inner husks and remove silk. Spread corn with soft butter. Pull husks back over corn and tie. Place on grill about three inches from coals; cook 20 to 30 minutes. Serve with salt, pepper and butter.

— Cooks.com

and keep the core temperature down.

After at least half an hour, the corn is then transferred into a cooler maintained at 38 degrees.

Keeping corn cool until the minute customers buy it is the Danielses' big secret.

Flavor can be compromised when corn is picked and left alone, Andy Daniels said, because the sugar quickly breaks down into starch.

Hydrocooling all but stops sweet corn's sugar-to-starch conversion.

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Tannie Daniels of Daniels Produce keeps her sweet corn chilled until the minute she sells it Saturday mornings at the Haymarket Farmers Market.

DANIELS

PRODUCE