

Farmers Market: Sweet corn

Sweet corn sells fast on Saturdays

BY JOEL GEHRINGER

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Tannie Daniels barely had a spare moment Saturday morning.

As soon as she sold one bag of Daniels Produce sweet corn, she was rushing to grab another for the next customer.

Her booth on the north end of the Farmers Market was easily the busiest booth that morning. The line of people waiting to get their hands on some all-American, Fourth of July sweet corn stretched past three booths and almost rounded the corner down Seventh Street.

"It just seems like everybody wanted corn for the Fourth or family picnics or camping, so it's been a very busy week," Daniels said.

The sweet corn season will be in full swing through these first weeks of July, but Daniels is the first vendor to sell it at this year's market.

That's because the Danielses cover more than 30 of their 300 acres of sweet corn with a layer of plastic, which heats the soil and makes the plants germinate and develop earlier.

"It costs a lot more to do it that way, but it gets us to the market first," said Andy Daniels, who didn't come to the market Saturday but operates the Daniels farm in Columbus. "This was a nice weekend to have (sweet corn), especially when no one else has it."

The Farmers Market is known for the freshness of its products, and the Daniels stand is no exception. The ears are pulled off the stalks just 12 to 24 hours before arriving at the market.

Immediately after being picked, the corn is hydrocooled — it's submerged in chlorinated ice water, which kills bacteria and keeps the core temperature at a minimum.

Keeping the corn cool ensures flavor, the Danielses said. At low temperatures, the sugars inside the produce can't break down into starch.

So as long as the ears stay cooled to 38 degrees, the sweet corn stays sweet.

Daniels Produce corn is sold all across the state in Russ's Markets and Super Savers, but it's in the Haymarket where it's the freshest.

A dozen ears sell for \$4, or seven for \$2.50.

And despite the long lines, there's no rush to buy. Sweet corn will be available for a few months, Tannie Daniels said.

"Andy plants every week" she said. "We'll have fresh sweet corn until the middle of September. Our season is pretty long."

As for preparing sweet corn, Daniels didn't recommend much. Most people boil it for about 10 minutes then chow down, she said.

But she also recommended grilling the ears while still in their husks.

To do this, the corn should be soaked in ice water for an hour before grilling.

"That way it's cold and the moisture makes sure the husks don't burn," she said.

Daniels expects another busy week this Saturday, but she said she doesn't mind.

As long as people keep showing up, she'll keep selling, no matter how long the line.

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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 3 inches from coals; cook 20 to 30 minutes. Serve with salt, pepper and butter.

From www.cooks.com

Firecracker Grilled Corn on the Cob

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
2 teaspoons red pepper sauce
8 ears corn on the cob

In a small bowl, combine butter and red pepper sauce. Mix well. Melt, if desired.

Peel one side of corn husk away from cob without removing completely and loosen remaining husk. Do not remove silk. Brush butter mixture over kernels and smooth back husk to original shape. Twist open end to close.

Prepare grill. Place corn directly onto coals. Cover grill with lid or foil tent.

Cook two to three minutes. Test. If not done, turn and roast another two minutes. The outside husk will be charred. To serve, strip off husks and silk. Makes 8 servings.

From www.cooks.com



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Tannie Daniels (left) and Michelle Konwinski sell sweet corn at the Farmers Market.