Have you ever wondered how corn evolved? After all, the seeds are all crammed together on the cob and wrapped tightly inside the thick husks. Seems impossible for the seeds to disperse without a human to peel the husks and separate the kernels.

Come to find out, corn, or maize, only exists in its modern form because of humans. Evidence from archaeological and genetic studies suggests that maize was bred and cultivated by early inhabitants of Mexico as early as ten thousand years ago. The early Mesoamericans managed to develop corn from its grassy ancestor by selective breeding. Maize was bred from a wild grain called teosinte.

Teosinte is so unlike modern corn that originally botanists didn’t think the two were even related. An ear of teosinte is only about three inches long, with just five to twelve kernels. Compare that to the corn we eat today, which can have over five-hundred kernels!

Teosinte kernels also have a “tooth-crackingly” hard shell. But through many generations, ancient Americans selectively bred plants with larger and larger ears, and softer and softer kernels. Now all that is left of that hard shell is the thin tissue that gets stuck between your teeth when munching a cob of corn.

Lets tip our hats to the ancient Mesoamericans! Thanks to their sophisticated understanding of plant breeding, we have corn for eating, livestock feed, cooking oil, ethanol and even making plastics!

你有没有想过玉米是如何进化的？毕竟，种子都挤在玉米棒上，紧紧裹在厚厚的果壳里。在没有人剥离果壳和分离果仁的情况下，种子似乎不可能分散。

来发现，玉米或玉米只是因为人类而以现代形式存在。来自考古和遗传研究的证据表明，早在一万年前，墨西哥的早期居民就培育和种植了玉米。早期的中美洲人通过选择性繁殖设法从其草原祖先开发玉米。玉米是从一种名为teosinte的野生谷物中繁殖出来的。

Teosinte与现代玉米不同，最初植物学家并不认为这两者甚至是相关的。teosinte的耳朵只有大约3英寸长，只有5到12个内核。与我们今天吃的玉米相比，它可以有五百多粒！

Teosinte内核还具有“牙齿裂纹”硬壳。但是经过许多代人的发展，古代美国人选择性地培育出耳朵越来越大，核仁越来越柔软的植物。现在硬壳上留下的所有东西都是在咀嚼玉米棒时卡在牙齿间的薄薄纸巾。

让我们的帽子给古代中美洲人！由于他们对植物育种的深刻理解，我们有吃玉米，牲畜饲料，食用油，乙醇，甚至制作塑料！