

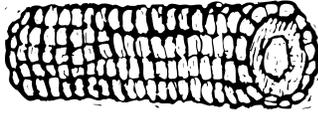
PRICE TAG/COST TAG

What costs aren't included in the price of your food?

Sweet Corn

Price Tag

Sweet corn sells from around \$1.99 to \$4.99/dozen fresh, \$1.25-\$2.69/pound frozen, and \$.80 for 11-15 ounces canned. What are the associated costs?



Sweet Corn Cost Tag

Food Miles

Florida produces the most sweet corn for fresh use,¹ providing northern states with this traditional summer crop in the off season. Sugars in raw sweet corn start converting to starches rapidly after the corn is picked, making it progressively less sweet and tender. Some supersweet varieties lose their sugars more slowly. Freshly picked, local corn has the best quality. Freeze or can local sweet corn to enjoy this quality year round.

Washington, Minnesota and Wisconsin produce the most sweet corn for commercial processing.² While fresh corn had the highest level of per capita consumption in 2009, frozen corn was a close second and canned corn was third.³ Commercial freezing and canning of sweet corn use similar amounts of energy per serving.⁴

Genetic Diversity

Sweet corn came about from a natural, recessive mutation in field corn. While hundreds of open pollinated (non-hybrid) varieties of sweet corn were available around 1900, only about 50 are available today.⁵ Even though current sweet corn breeding practices rely on complex combinations of genes, open pollinated varieties can provide useful genetic material to address new challenges in sweet corn production, including emerging pest and disease issues.

Environmental Impact

Many sweet corn growers reduce pesticide use through integrated pest management (IPM) and organic farming. Farmers practicing IPM and organic farming scout and manage their fields in ways that decrease or eliminate pesticide use. This helps keep pesticides out of our food, lakes, streams and groundwater. Buy locally grown sweet corn from farmers who minimally use synthetic inputs. Urge the produce manager to label the origin of the sweet corn sold at your grocery store.

The price you pay for your food may or may not include all of the costs associated with it, such as costs to the environment and to the health of those who produce and consume it. Learn all you can about the food you buy—your choices matter!

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¹USDA Economic Research Service. (2008). *US sweet corn: Fresh-market production by state, 1960-2007*. [Table 2] Retrieved March 15, 2010 (usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1564).

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³USDA Economic Research Service. (2010). *US per capita use of selected, commercially produced, fresh, and processing vegetables and melons 1970-2010*. [Table 1] Retrieved March 29, 2011 (usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1212).

⁴Rao, M.A. (2007). "Energy consumption for refrigerated, canned, and frozen snap peas and corn" [Abstract]. *Journal of Food Process Engineering*, 3(2):61-76.

Genetic Diversity

⁵Tracy, W.F. (2001). "Sweet Corn," in *Specialty Corns*, A.R. Hallauer, ed, p172. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.



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