

Haudenosaunee Boiled Cornbread

Serves 4-8

Corn is a vital component of Haudenosaunee culture. The Haudenosaunee people are also known as the Iroquois Confederacy or the Six Nations comprised of the Oneida, Onadoga, Cayuga, Mohawk, Seneca and later Tuscarora peoples.

Corn is part of the “three sisters” system of companion planting corn, beans and squash together. The three plants help and support each other and are usually grown in mounds of hills. The corn stalks provide a pole for the beans, beans provide nitrogen to the soil and stabilizes the corn stalks. Squash vines shade the soil, keep weeds down and moisture in, spines on the vines keep animals away.

Making traditional corn flour is a very labour-intensive process. After the corn is harvested it is husked, braided and dried. The corn is then removed from the cob and undergoes a process called nixtamalization. The corn is boiled in sieved hardwood ashes to remove the outer casings. The corn is then rinsed in a basket made from black-ash strappings then boiled an additional three times. The entire process can take up to 5 hours to complete. This process improves the nutrition of the corn by increasing its calcium content by as much as 750% and adding nutrients such as niacin, iron, copper and zinc and digestive enzymes. The lyed corn is then dried for several days, then pounded and sieved to make flour.

If you would like to try traditional corn bread but do not have access to hand pounded corn flour you could use white corn flour, not corn starch, from the grocery store. P.A.N or Masa brand can be found in most grocery stores and is a pretty good substitute.

1 1/2 cups white corn flour

Boiling water (1 to 1 1/2 cups)

1/2 cup dried blueberries, nuts or drained and rinsed canned kidney beans

Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat.

Measure the corn flour into a mixing bowl. Add enough boiling water, about 1 cup, to the flour to make a firm paste. Mix with a wooden spoon until it has cooled and add more water a quarter cup at a time, if needed to make a firm dough. Add the blueberries, nuts or beans to the mixture and knead well to form the dough into a ball.

Form the dough into two discs and shape into thick patties.

Gently add the discs to the boiling water. Boil the patties for 30-45 minutes or until they remain floating on the top of the water.

Remove the patties from the water and drain. Slice and serve with maple syrup or butter if desired.