



## Microwaved Cheesy Corny Queso Family FUNdido

By Erin Fletter

**Prep Time 8 / Cook Time 2 / Serves 4 - 8**

### Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

**stir:** to mix together two or more ingredients with a spoon or spatula, usually in a circle pattern, or figure eight, or in whatever direction you like!

**knife skills:** Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls) and Rock and Saw.

**dice:** to cut foods into small pieces of equal size so that the food is cooked evenly or looks uniform and pleasant when used in the recipe.

**squeeze:** to firmly press or twist a food with fingers, hands, or a device to remove its liquid, like shredded potatoes, frozen and thawed spinach, or tofu.

**toss:** to lightly lift and drop food items together or coat food items with flour, or a sauce or dressing, as in a salad.

**microwave:** to heat or cook food or liquid quickly in a microwave oven, which uses high-frequency electromagnetic waves to generate heat in the food's water molecules.

### Equipment

- Microwave
- Microwave-safe bowl
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife (a butter knife works great)
- Paper towel
- Measuring spoons
- Wooden spoon
- Can opener

Liquid measuring cup

## Ingredients

### Microwaved Cheesy Corny Queso Family FUNdido

- 1 tomato **\*\***(Omit for NIGHTSHADE/TOMATO ALLERGY)**\*\***
- 8 oz grated Monterey Jack, fontina, mozzarella, or mild cheddar cheese or a combination **\*\***(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free cheese shreds, like Daiya brand)**\*\***
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp cornstarch
- 3/4 C evaporated milk **\*\***(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free milk)**\*\***
- 1/4 C corn kernels, fresh or frozen
- 1 squeeze lime juice, optional
- Optional garnishes:
  - 1 tsp chopped fresh cilantro
  - 1 green onion, chopped
  - 1 sprinkle chili powder **\*\***(for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY sub ground cumin)**\*\***
  - 1 sprinkle dried oregano
  - 1 sprinkle pomegranate seeds
  - 2 T pepitas (green pumpkin seeds)

## Food Allergen Substitutions

### Microwaved Cheesy Corny Queso Family FUNdido

**Nightshade:** Omit tomato. Substitute ground cumin for optional chili powder.

**Dairy:** Substitute dairy-free/nut-free cheese, like Daiya brand. Substitute dairy-free/nut-free milk for evaporated milk.

## Instructions

### Microwaved Cheesy Corny Queso Family FUNdido

intro

"Queso fundido" (KAY-soh fun-DEE-doh) is Spanish for "molten cheese."

#### dice + squeeze

Dice **1 tomato** into little bits, then wrap the diced tomato into a paper towel and squeeze! We want to get rid as much of the juice as possible. Then, set the diced and squeezed tomato to the side.

#### measure + toss

Measure and add **8 ounces grated cheese**, **1/2 teaspoon salt**, and **2 teaspoons cornstarch** into a microwave-safe bowl. Toss everything together. The cornstarch should evenly coat the cheese.

#### pour + add

Pour **3/4 cup evaporated milk** into the bowl and add the diced tomatoes and the **1/4 cup corn kernels**.

#### cook + stir + cook + stir

Place the bowl in the microwave and cook the cheese mixture for 1 minute. Carefully stir the dip with a wooden spoon and then microwave it for another 30 seconds. Carefully take it out and stir the cheese mixture again. Cook it for 30 seconds more and stir it again. At this point, the queso fundido should be smooth, but if it's not, continue cooking it for 30-second increments and stirring until it is smooth.

#### squeeze + garnish + enjoy

We recommend squeezing **1 lime wedge** on top of the queso right before serving. Kids can sprinkle on the optional garnishes of their choice: **1 teaspoon chopped fresh cilantro**, **1 sprinkle of chili powder**, **1 chopped green onion**, **2 tablespoons pepitas** (green pumpkin seeds), **1 sprinkle of oregano**, and **1 sprinkle of pomegranate seeds**. Serve chips and salsa, like **Kid-Invented Salsa** and **Jazzed-Up Savory Chips**, with the Cheesy Corny Queso Family FUNdido dip, and enjoy!

## Featured Ingredient: Corn!

Hi, my name is Maizy, and I'm an ear of corn!

"I'm pretty close to my dad—his name's Pop Corn. (I know, my humor can be kind of corny ... but, that's me!) I'm great to eat on the cob, either boiled or grilled, especially at summer picnics. If you buy me in a store, make sure my husk is still on and pull it back just a bit. My kernels should look fresh, plump, and juicy! (A kernel might just squirt liquid when poked or eaten!) So, how do you eat corn on the cob? Across, down, or both?"

### History

Corn was first cultivated by indigenous people in southern Mexico anywhere from 7 to 10,000 years ago. Corn is unique: most vegetables and fruits we eat today are domesticated versions of wild plants humans

discovered long ago. Corn is a human invention and did not exist in the wild first, although it did start from a wild grass called "teosinte." Teosinte didn't look like modern corn on the cob looks today. The kernels were much smaller and further apart.

Corn was known as "maize" by Native Americans in South and North America, and they eventually depended upon this crop for food. Over time, maize was selected to have more kernels, bigger cobs, and more kernel rows.

Many Native American tribes tell the story of the origin of corn. Tribes preserved their tales and retold them over many generations. They passed down stories through oral tradition, writing down only some of the stories. According to Native American lore, corn came to Earth by various routes.

When Spanish explorers arrived in the Americas, they had never seen corn before, among many other things the indigenous people showed them.

Corn is produced on every continent in the world except Antarctica! As a result, corn and cornmeal are staple foods of many regions.

Native Americans used to braid corn husks to make masks, moccasins, sleeping mats, baskets, and dolls. Today, corn is in many products we use daily. Cornstarch is used to thicken sauces, to strengthen the fabric used to make clothing, and to bind books. Soft drinks are sweetened with corn syrup, chickens and cows are fed corn, and the ink in pens is made from corn oil. Corn is used to make glue, shoe polish, marshmallows, ice cream, and makeup. Corn is also used to produce ethanol—a liquid biofuel used to power cars.

Corn comes in many colors, including black, blue-gray, purple, green, red, white, and yellow.

The six main types of corn are: "Sweet" corn is the kind we eat. "Dent" corn is fed to cows and chickens.

Another variety is "Popcorn," a popular snack food. Its hard kernels inflate and burst open when heated.

"Flint" or "Indian" corn is multicolored and often used for Thanksgiving decoration, although it's also used to make popcorn and blue and red corn chips and tortillas. "Pod" corn (or wild maize) is a mutated type of corn that grows glumes (leaf structures) around each kernel and is used for ornamental purposes. Finally, "Flour" corn is mainly used to make corn flour (that makes sense!).

The early settlers to North America considered corn so valuable they used it as currency to trade for other products such as meat and furs.

## Anatomy & Etymology

Corn is a tall plant grass that has large ears with many seeds or kernels.

Most corn plants have a single stalk. The stalk grows vertically up from the ground, and the variety of corn and the plant's environment will determine how tall it grows.

Corn plants have both male and female parts—the name for this type of plant is "monoecious." The male part, the tassel, emerges at the top of the plant when all the leaves have formed. The tassel contains many branches that house many small male flowers. The female part of the corn plant is the silk that grows out of the ear. The immature ear consists of a cob, eggs that develop into kernels after pollination, and silks. One corn plant will produce more than one ear of corn, with the ear at the top of the plant usually growing the largest.

According to the USDA, corn can be used as a grain or a vegetable, depending on when it is harvested. If

corn is fully mature and becomes dry, it is considered a grain. It can then be ground into cornmeal or corn masa, which you'll find in corn tortillas, cornbread, etc. Popcorn kernels are also whole grains that are harvested when mature. Corn on the cob and the corn kernels found in frozen or canned corn are picked when the kernels are soft and full of water. In these forms, corn is considered a starchy vegetable. One ear of corn has, on average, as many as 800 kernels in 16 rows! Corn will always have an even number of rows on each cob. Each kernel can potentially become a new plant! The word for "corn" that is used by most of the world is "maize," which comes from the Spanish word "maiz."

## How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Fresh corn on the cob is seasonal during July and August. Choose ears of corn with yellow or white niblets and inspect each ear of corn before buying. Avoid any corn that has dark or dried spots. Store fresh corn in the fridge until ready to use.

Frozen corn is a great alternative when fresh corn isn't in season. You don't have to thaw frozen corn before adding it to baked recipes, soups, pasta, chili, or risotto! However, if adding frozen corn to sautéed recipes, run a colander of frozen corn under warm water to thaw it out a bit first.

Sauté frozen corn rather than boiling it—boiling will destroy all the flavor! Butter, salt, and pepper are all you need. When sautéing corn, add the salt right at the end. Since salt draws out moisture, salting too soon will dry out your corn.

Frozen corn tastes fresher than canned corn. Many grocery stores even sell frozen cobs of corn. Frozen corn will keep for months.

## Nutrition

Phosphorous is a mineral the body uses to build strong bones. Phosphorus also helps the body to produce energy. Starches in corn also provide you with long-lasting energy.

Fiber helps to keep our inner pipelines clean and clear. Drinking plenty of water helps move fiber through our intestines to clean them out! Vegetables, fruit, and grains have the most fiber of any food. Fiber is also important for our hearts! Leaving on the edible peels of vegetables and fruits also helps us to eat more fiber.

Potassium helps balance water in the body when eating salty foods by maintaining normal fluid levels inside our cells. Salt or sodium regulates the fluid outside of our cells. It is also necessary for proper muscle contraction, nerve transmission, and better blood pressure.