

It's creamy and sweet, unmistakably "corn-y," inspired by the pure sweetness of summer and ever-so-slightly boozy, thanks to the brilliant blueberry-infused batch bourbon whiskey produced by one of our local distilleries.

This recipe makes 1 1/2 quarts ice cream. There are two equally important components: the custard and the compote. The custard needs plenty of time to chill before freezing, so we'll begin here.

INGREDIENTS – THE CUSTARD

2 cups whole milk
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 cup organic cane sugar, divided
Pinch of sea salt
4 good-sized ears fresh sweet corn, husk and silk removed*
3 free range egg yolks
1 Tbsp. vodka* (optional, for improved texture)
Blueberry-whiskey compote (recipe and instructions follow)

*NOTES

Corn—choose the deepest yellow color corn you can find, for a richer appearance of ice cream. It also helps to have corn picked at its peak level of sweetness.

Vodka—the alcohol is completely optional in this ice cream. It does not affect the flavor, but is helpful for the final texture, making the ice cream easier to scoop straight from the freezer.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Trim the ends of the corn ears. This will make it easier to stand them on end and use your knife to carefully strip the kernels completely off the ear. Repeat with all pieces of corn and *keep* the cobs. Cut the cobs in half crosswise, into chunks about 3 inches long.
2. Add milk, heavy cream and half of the sugar to a heavy bottomed pot and warm over medium-low heat, stirring constantly to dissolve sugar. Add all of the corn kernels and the cob chunks to the pot. Stir to submerge the cobs, reduce the heat and simmer on low until mixture is *just barely* bubbling at the edges.
3. Remove cobs from the mixture and cool enough to handle, then squeeze each cob with your clean hands to extract the flavorful goodness. Discard the cobs, and remove the corn-cream mixture from the heat.
4. Use the immersion blender* to process the corn-cream mixture, but only for about 30 seconds, to extract another hit of flavor from the corn before we strain it.
5. Set a large double-mesh strainer over a large glass bowl, and pour the pureed mixture through it to separate the corn from the cream. Gently press down on the corn to extract as much liquid as you can; you might even want to do this in batches. Either discard the corn, or save some of it to add to your next corn bread recipe.

6. Return the strained cream to the heavy-bottomed pot. Stir over low heat just until it begins to steam.
7. In a mixing bowl, whisk egg yolks with remaining sugar on medium speed until the mixture is smooth, light-colored and slightly thickened. Ladle out 1 cup of the hot cream mixture into a measuring cup with a pour spout. While whisking the yolks, pour in a *slow and steady* stream of the cream mixture to temper the eggs. Repeat with another 1/2 cup of the cream mixture.
8. Pour the tempered egg mixture back into the pot with the remaining cream, stirring constantly over low heat. Frequently check the back of your spoon – when you can make a visible line on it with your finger, the custard is done.
9. Remove from heat, pour into a large glass bowl over an ice bath and stir until it cools. Lay a sheet of plastic wrap directly on the surface, sealing out any air bubbles. Cover the entire bowl with a lid or another layer of plastic wrap and place the bowl in the refrigerator overnight.

THE BLUEBERRY WHISKEY COMPOTE

1 cup frozen blueberries
1/2 cup organic cane sugar
1/2 cup blueberry juice (optional; substitute ¼ cup water)
3 oz. Smashing Violet blueberry infused bourbon whiskey*
Generous squeeze of fresh lemon juice

*This stuff is pretty incredible, but only available in North Carolina, either at the Broad Branch Distillery in Winston-Salem or select North Carolina ABC stores. Substitute a craft bourbon of your choice for similar results.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a medium saucepan, combine the blueberries, cane sugar and blueberry juice (or water) over medium-high heat. Stir until sugar dissolves and mixture comes to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring and smashing berries occasionally, until mixture is reduced and the syrup begins to bubble vigorously.
2. Stir in Smashing Violet whiskey (or your bourbon substitute). Simmer another 5 to 8 minutes, to burn off some of the sharpness of the alcohol while reducing the compote again.
3. Remove from heat, cool to room temperature, then place plastic wrap directly on top of the compote and chill in refrigerator at least an hour, but preferably overnight. This mixture will thicken up significantly as it cools.

In the morning, set up the ice cream machine and freeze the custard according to manufacturer's instructions. The blueberry ribbon is added later, so only do the custard at this stage.

Add a layer of frozen custard into insulated container, then alternate layers of blueberry whiskey compote and custard (ending with custard on top) and freeze until firm, at least 4 hours. Call a couple friends to come over and hang out in the backyard, and thank God for the sweet blessings of summer.