

Bead Your Own Indian Corn — Follow the directions on page 2 and 3!



Native American Corn ~ Historical Introduction

Do you like corn? If you do, you would have enjoyed the tasty meals made by the Apalachee Indians in Florida 350 years ago! They grew and ate a lot of corn. But guess what? So did their neighbors! The Guale, Apalachicola, Chacato, and Timucua peoples who lived around the Apalachee all grew corn too. So they all had something in common: corn was a large part of their diet!

But the corn that these Native American communities in North Florida and the surrounding areas ate did not look much like the big, yellow sweet corn many people eat today. In fact, they grew more than one type of corn! Dr. John Hann—an important historian who studied Mission San Luis—wrote about the types of corn that one of these groups ate:

"Like the Apalachicola, the Apalachee probably had several varieties of corn, each used for a different purpose ...the Apalachicola had three varieties: first 'the smaller sort of Indian corn, which usually ripens in two months,' which they planted as soon as the weather permitted; second, one that was 'yellow and flinty, which they call hommony-corn'; third, 'the largest, of a very white and soft grain termed bread-corn.'"

Dr. Hann also talks about some of the meals that were made from the corn:

"Corn was consumed in a number of ways: as a lye-hominy porridge made with ashes, in little cakes made of cornmeal, in a thin gruel, onsla, or a thick gruel, atole, and, on journeys, as toasted or parched corn flour."

Wow! So there were **different types of corn** that were used to make a great variety of (many different types of) meals. And this corn could also come in many different colors, including white, yellow, red, purple, and blue!

But why was corn so special that many Native communities in Florida and beyond depended on it? Well, Native peoples knew that **corn was important for their health**. Corn, beans, and squash were the three main foods the Apalachee (and other Native communities around them) grew hundreds of years ago. Today, we know that when eaten together, corn, beans, and squash make a balanced diet. In other words, Native people in Florida and the Southeast got a lot of the important nutrients that their bodies needed to stay healthy by eating these three foods. They are a marvelous food team! And without corn, that team would not have been complete.

Corn was also a very reliable crop! One ear (or piece) of corn gives you a lot of food to eat, and many ears of corn could be grown at one time. And the surplus (extra) could be dried and stored to eat in the future.

Corn is a plant with many uses! From the corn kernels to the inner cob to the soft outer corn husks, every part of the plant was used. No wonder many Native communities grew it for hundreds of years. To many Native American societies—including many in the Southeast—corn was (and still is) important not just for food: it is also linked to the larger ideas of rebirth and renewal in society. Corn and its gifts to the community have been, and still are, passed down for generations—from family to family, and from community to community. Corn continues to give to the community into the future!

Beaded Corn Craft



Corn Craft Supplies:

To make an ear of Indian corn, you will need:

- Four green or brown pipe cleaners
- Pony beads or other large beads in the colors yellow, white, purple, red, and brown

Corn Craft Directions:



1. To begin making your ear of corn, take two pipe cleaners and twist them around each other in the middle to make a cross.



2. Connect the other two pipe cleaners by wrapping them around the middle of the first two in the same way to form another "X" on top of the first one. Make sure that the ends of each of the second pipe cleaners are between the ends of the first pipe cleaners. Your pipe cleaner arrangement should now have eight "arms," almost like an octopus!

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3. Now it's time for the fun! Start adding different color beads to each of the pipe cleaner arms and see what patterns form! Be sure to leave an inch to an inch and a half at the end of each pipe cleaner free of beads.

4. Once you are done beading, pull all the empty ends together (be careful that no beads come off the pipe cleaners) and twist them tightly around each other. All of the ends should stay closed together now, and no beads should fall off. Spread out the ends slightly so that they look like corn husks at the top of the corn.

Enjoy your beaded corn cob!

You can make as many as you like and have a whole field of Native American corn!

