

(From *Lobster at Home* by Jasper White)

Sweet Corn Fritters

These crisp golden fritters, made with fresh sweet corn and cornmeal, are a perfect side dish for chowder. They are also great with boiled, steamed or grilled lobster and are delicious all by themselves as an appetizer or snack. Use any variety of sweet corn, although the yellow and bi-color varieties will make the fritters more colorful.

It will take about twenty minutes to fry the entire batch, so have a heated oven (200°F) ready to keep them warm. You can make great fritters with yellow cornmeal, but for authentic New England flavor, use real johnnycake meal (see page 230 for mail-order information), a stone-ground meal made from White Flint Indian corn.

Equipment: You will need a heavy saucepan 8 to 10 inches in diameter and 6 inches deep and a frying thermometer. If you have a FryDaddy or other deep fryer, here is your chance to use it. Form the fritters with an ordinary table or soup spoon or, best of all, a small ice-cream scoop. A wire mesh or slotted spoon is perfect for removing the fritters from the fat.

2 large or 3 small ears fresh sweet corn, husked	1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
1 small red bell pepper (4 ounces), very finely diced	½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons unsalted butter	¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1½ cups all-purpose flour	5 scallions (green and white parts), thinly sliced
½ cup johnnycake meal or yellow cornmeal	3 large eggs, beaten
1 tablespoon baking powder	1 cup milk
	corn oil for frying

1. Bring a pot (4 quarts or more) of lightly salted water to a boil. Wipe away any corn silk sticking to the ears of corn. Drop the ears in the water and cook until the corn is tender, 1 to 5 minutes, depending on the corn. Generally, the younger and fresher the corn, the quicker it will cook. I always take a little nibble to test for doneness. Use tongs to remove the corn and let cool to room temperature. With a knife, cut the kernels from the cob. With the back of the knife, scrape out any milky remains and add to the kernels. You should have 1½ cups.
2. Combine the bell pepper and butter in a small skillet over low heat and simmer for about 5 minutes until tender. Remove from the heat. This may seem like a lot of butter for the pepper, but the butter will also serve as the fat in the batter.
3. In a large mixing bowl, stir together the flour, johnnycake meal, baking powder, salt, pepper and cayenne. Add the corn, bell pepper and butter, scallions, eggs and milk. Mix thor-

oughly but do not overmix, or the fritters will be too chewy. Cover and chill the batter for at least 1 hour and up to 6 hours.

4. Before you fry, check the consistency of the batter; it should be thick enough to hold its shape on a spoon. It will be thicker than most batters (such as muffin batter) and have a gritty texture. The batter can be thickened by sprinkling in more flour, or it can be thinned with a few drops of milk. Heat 3 inches oil to 350°F in a deep, heavy saucepan. Use one spoon to scoop out some batter and another to free the batter from the spoon. If you are using an ice-cream scoop, squeeze the handle to release the fritter. Drop 1 fritter into the hot oil and fry, turning it with tongs or a spoon so that it cooks evenly, for about 2 minutes until it is deep golden brown. Remove it with a mesh or slotted spoon, give it a little shake over the pot of oil to drain and place it on a plate lined with paper towels to absorb the excess oil. Check the size; it should be about the size of a golf ball, no larger. Taste this test fritter and adjust the seasoning and consistency if necessary. Salt plays an important role in cornmeal-based breads, enhancing the flavor of the corn and the cornmeal.

5. Drop 5 or 6 fritters into the pot. There should be enough space for them to move freely. Cook 2 to 3 minutes until golden brown, turning frequently so that they cook evenly. Remove, drain and place on a plate lined with paper towels. Keep them in a warm oven while you continue to fry. Bring the oil back to 350°F between batches. Serve as soon as possible.

Makes 2 dozen small fritters

VARIATIONS

These fritters are even better with a little ham or bacon. Add 2 to 3 ounces cooked ham, finely diced, or 3 ounces bacon, fried crisp and finely chopped. You can also substitute the rendered bacon fat (3 tablespoons) for the butter. This recipe can be halved, but beware: Even when it is just my wife and three kids, half a batch leaves us wanting more!