

**Agriculture: Corn crops up early this year, to the delight of farmers and consumers alike**



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Murray Nash (above) and his partner Lawrence Burkholder run Homewood Farms on Hwy. 7 just east of Ninth Line in Markham. Nash says he's never seen corn this early.

# The year of the ear

*Fresh cobs are being harvested now, three weeks earlier than usual*

BY FRED SIMPSON  
 STAFF WRITER

Welcome to the summer of King Corn. Or is it the season of El Nino? Whatever the name tag, it's proving to be an early boon to shoppers whose mouths are already watering in anticipation of summer corn roasts.

They don't have to wait for August. The day is here right now, two to three weeks ahead of schedule.

"I've been in the business for 15 or 16 years and this is the earliest start to the corn season ever," observed Bill Redelmeier as he surveyed a field of corn as high as an elephant's eye at his Southbrook Farms Market Garden in Richmond Hill this week.

"We're three weeks ahead for almost everything." Even as he spoke, two of his wide-eyed early shoppers were busy stuffing corn into shopping bags.

"This is a real bonus," said Stuart Kouch of King City, as he charged ahead with the task at hand. "I've never shopped for corn this early."

"We had some last week already and it was delicious." For Kouch, that means it's party time.

"We live out in the country at a place where we have family gatherings and you can boil it outside in a fire pit. Equally upbeat is John Coleman of Richmond Hill.

"This is the definitely the earliest I've ever had freshly

grown corn," he said. "I guess El Nino is helping out." Others were browsing among a cornucopia of equally early cauliflower, broccoli and beets.

"It's really been a hot spring," said Southbrook manager Denise Gouldie. "I've been here 10 years and I've never seen it like this."

It's the same scenario just down the road at the Shy-Low Garden Market at Carrville Road and Bathurst Street, where a poster trumpets in bold letters that "Fresh Ontario corn is early, apricots, yellow plums, cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes, beans, dills, blueberries, fresh eggs and honey."

"It's the earliest I've known it and I've been doing this for 10 years," said Shy-Low's Angie Ross, echoing the theme of everyone on the growing season.

**This is definitely the earliest I've ever had freshly grown corn!**

• Stuart Kouch  
 Customer

**RIPE FOR THE PICKING**

Bill Whittaker, who has been serving in the trenches at Shy-Low for the past 20 years, said people have been slow to react to the bountiful harvest because they're not used to it, they don't realize everything is ready.

"It's all out there and ready for the picking," he said, indicating 150 acres of corn painting a background of green behind the market booth.

If there's a down side to the early harvest, it comes from Redelmeier, who grows plenty of pumpkins for Halloween.

"The only thing I don't want early is pumpkins," he said. "I'm not sure what we do with pumpkins in August. We can't very well move Halloween ahead."

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