

## Mexican Street Corn Salad (Esquites) with avocado crema © Hetty Lui McKinnon for To Vegetables, With Love

Esquites is a creamy, spiced corn salad that is reminiscent of elote, the beloved Mexican dish of charred corn-on-the-cob slathered in a spicy and creamy sauce. All the elements of elote are here, including the smoky corn which develops complex flavours in a fry pan rather than a hot barbecue. While fresh corn is great for this dish, it is not essential. Frozen, defrosted corn kernels work just as well, making this an excellent pantry dish. While many esquites recipes will include mayonnaise, I've skipped that here and included some mashed avocado for a bright creaminess. You can serve this salad in a number of ways – wrap it up in a tortilla, scoop it up with corn chips or cook up some pasta and toss it through for a corny salad.

To veganise this dish, substitute the sour cream with vegan mayonnaise or a plant-based sour cream/yoghurt and omit the cheese.

Serves 4

2 tablespoons neutral oil such as canola or safflower 750g (5 cups) corn kernels (fresh from 6-7 cobs of corn or defrosted from frozen) sea salt and black pepper 40g (1/3 cup) grated cotija or finely crumbled feta cheese 1/2 teaspoon chilli powder, cayenne or smoked paprika coriander/cilantro leaves, to serve 1/2 lime, cut into wedges, to serve corn/flour tortillas or corn chips, to serve

## Avocado crema

1 large ripe avocado, halved 85g (1/3 cup) sour cream or Mexican crema small handful (about 30g /1 ounce) coriander/cilantro, leaves and stems finely chopped 1 small garlic clove, grated or finely chopped juice of 1-2 limes (about 3 tablespoons) 1 jalapeno pepper, seeds removed, finely chopped sea salt and black pepper

Heat a large skillet on medium high. When hot, add oil and the corn kernels. Season with 1 teaspoon of sea salt and a few turns of freshly ground black pepper. Cook for 10-12 minutes,

leaving to cook for 2 minutes at a time and then tossing, until the corn is charred. Transfer to a large bowl.

Meanwhile, place half of the avocado into a medium bowl and mash it up with a fork. To the avocado, add the sour cream or crema, coriander/cilantro, garlic, lime juice, jalapeno, a big pinch of sea salt and some black pepper. Stir to combine. Taste to check that you are happy with the seasonings, adjusting lime, salt and pepper, if needed.

Cut the remaining avocado into cubes. Add this to the corn, along with the avocado crema and toss to combine. Taste and season with sea salt and black pepper. To serve, top the corn with cotija or feta cheese, scatter with chilli powder, cayenne or smoked paprika, along with the coriander/cilantro leaves. Serve with lime wedges on the side, along with your choice of tortillas or corn chips.