

More Than

Just Food

Experimenting with food scraps as a useful material

Corn is more than just a commodity. From the Hopis of Northeast Arizona to the Tzotzil Maya of Mexico to the Haudenosaunee people living across Canada and the United States, corn has cultural and spiritual importance for many Indigenous peoples.

Of the hundreds of native corn varieties, we now commonly cultivate only 12,¹⁸ and the rest are at risk of becoming extinct.¹⁹ Conserving corn varieties is also about preserving and celebrating cultural identities, the land, biodiversity and Indigenous traditions.²⁰

Corn-husk Creation

Preparation: 30 minutes

So much of the corn plant (stalks, husks, cobs) never get eaten and appear to have no use. Yet, cobs can be ground into feed for animals or made into delicious soup stock. Husks are commonly used in Mexico as wraps for corn *tamales* and have been used traditionally across North America by Indigenous communities to make baskets, mats, moccasins and more. Let's experiment by making a corn husk toy.



You'll Need:

- Corn husks (dry husks under a weight to flatten overnight)
- Yarn or string
- Cloth/paper towel
- Scrap fabric/cloth, markers, buttons for decorating
- Scissors
- Glue



Making it Happen:

1. Soak husks in warm water for 10–15 minutes to soften
2. Pat dry
3. Follow the illustrations to craft your own corn husk character
4. For a skirt, trim husks evenly. To make pants, separate bottom of husk to make legs and tie husks at knees and ankles.
5. Add accessories to your craft: a superhero cape, mask, traditional outfit, hat or hair using yarn or string.

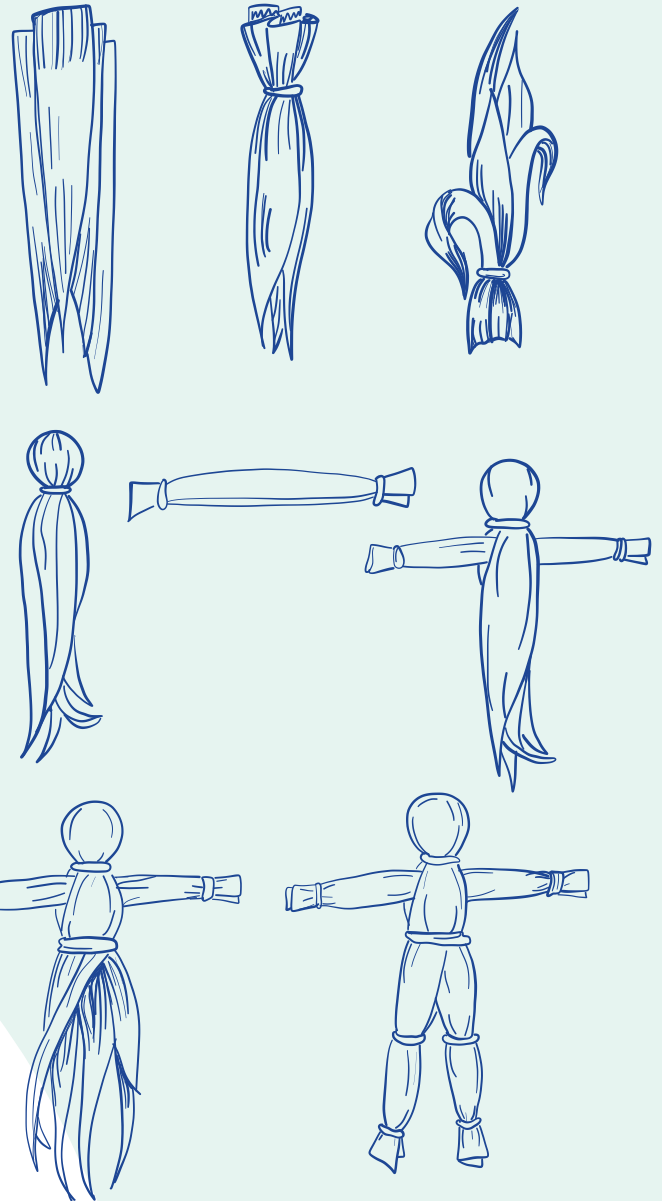


Image reference:

www.marthastewart.com/968909/harvest-time-corn-husk-dolls



Want to do More?

- Weigh husks before starting to measure food waste prevented.
- Experiment to see what else you can make out of corn husks. Rope? A basket? Use your imagination.
- Share your creation on social media: [#FoodMattersActionKit](#)

CLAIM
5 Innovator points

CLAIM
5 Influencer points



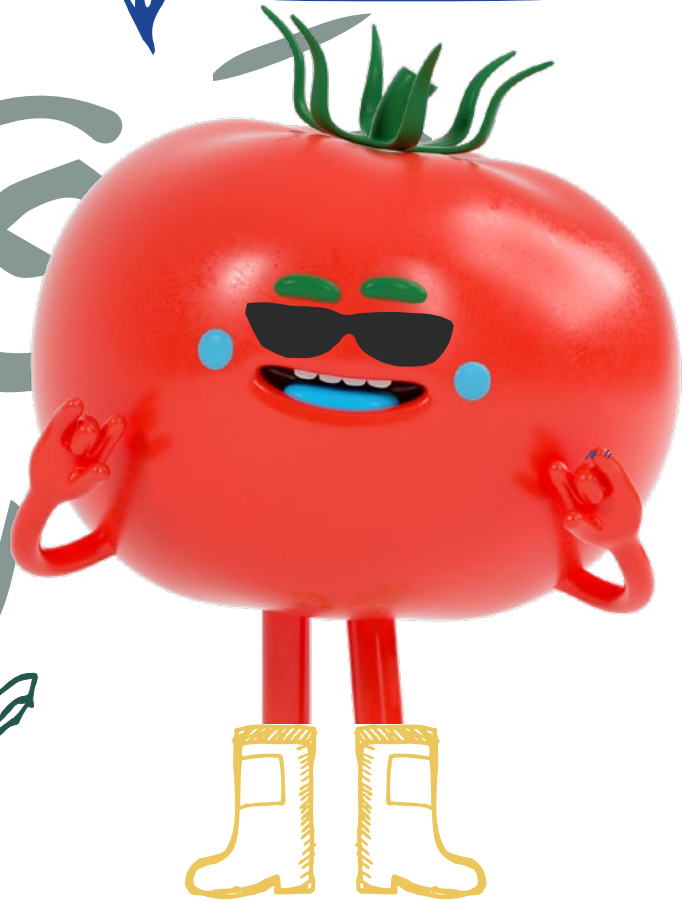
Did you know?

Corn is important to North America's food system. There are organizations working to conserve corn diversity by cultivating Indigenous corn varieties. Learn more here:

Canada: [Mohawk Seed Keepers](#)²¹

Mexico: [Chapingo Autonomous University proposal to preserve 65 native corn varieties](#)²²

United States: [Native Seed/SEARCH conservation of native plants, including Indigenous corn](#)²³



¹⁸Health Impact News (2018). 93% of the World's Seeds Have Been Lost in the Past 80 Years. <<https://healthimpactnews.com/2015/93-percent-of-the-worlds-seeds-have-been-lost-in-the-last-80-years/>>

¹⁹Massive Science (2017). What Ancient Corn Farmers Can Teach Us About Engineering Crops For Climate Change. <<https://massivesci.com/articles/ancient-corn-tortillas-farming-genetic-engineering/>>

²⁰Eames-Sheavly, Marcia (2002). The Three Sisters: Exploring an Iroquois Garden, Cornell Cooperative Extension. <<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/3621/2/Three+Sisters+-+Exploring+an+Iroquois+Garden.pdf>>

²¹Mohawk Seed Keepers (2018). <<http://seedkeeper.ca>>

²²Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2017). Preserving 65 native varieties of corn in Mexico: Key to the Sustainability of Indigenous Areas. <<http://www.fao.org/in-action/agronoticias/detail/en/c/1045647/>>

²³Native Seeds (2015). <<https://www.nativeseeds.org>>