

Prep Time: 5 minutes
Cook Time: 12-15 minutes
Total Time: 17-20 minutes
Servings: 4 ears of corn
Intensity Level: Easy (Beginner-Friendly)
Category: Side Dish / Snack
Cuisine: American

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Introduction

There's nothing quite like the taste of fresh corn on the cob in the summertime — sweet, juicy, and slathered in butter. But boiling a giant pot of water or firing up the grill isn't always practical, especially on a busy weeknight or when the weather refuses to cooperate. Enter the air fryer: a small appliance that has completely changed the way home cooks approach vegetables.

Air fryer corn on the cob is one of those rare recipes that delivers maximum flavor with minimum effort. The circulating hot air gently chars the kernels while keeping the inside tender and sweet, giving you that roasted, slightly caramelized flavor you'd normally get from a grill — without any of the smoke, cleanup, or waiting around. In under 20 minutes, you can go from fridge to plate with perfectly cooked corn every single time.

Whether you're serving a crowd at a backyard barbecue, meal-prepping lunches for the week, or simply craving a healthier alternative to butter-drenched stovetop corn, this recipe is about to become a staple in your kitchen. Let's walk through everything you need to know, from choosing the best ears to nailing the cook time for your specific air fryer model.

Ingredients

For the Corn

- 4 ears of fresh corn on the cob, husks and silk removed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (or melted butter, avocado oil, or cooking spray)
- 1 teaspoon sea salt (adjust to taste)

- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder (optional but recommended)
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional, for a smoky kick)

Optional Toppings

- 2 tablespoons melted butter for brushing
 - Freshly chopped parsley or cilantro
 - Grated Parmesan cheese
 - Chili powder and lime juice (for a Mexican street corn twist)
 - Honey butter (1 tablespoon honey + 2 tablespoons melted butter)
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Equipment Needed

- Air fryer (any size — 2-quart to 6-quart works, though larger baskets fit more ears)

- Basting brush or silicone brush
 - Tongs
 - Cutting board and knife (for trimming)
 - Aluminum foil (optional, for easier cleanup)
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Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Corn (5 minutes | Intensity: Easy)

Start by removing the husks and silk from each ear of corn. If you're using fresh corn, peel back the husks, pull off all the silk strands (running the ear under cold water helps), and snap off any long stems. Pat each ear dry with a paper towel — this step is crucial because excess moisture prevents the kernels from getting that nice roasted char.

If your corn cobs are too long to fit in your air fryer basket, simply cut them in half with a sharp knife. This also makes them easier to arrange and serve.

Step 2: Season the Corn (2 minutes | Intensity: Easy)

Place the corn on a plate or cutting board. Brush each ear generously with olive oil or melted butter, making sure to coat all sides. In a small bowl, mix together the salt, pepper, garlic powder, and smoked paprika. Sprinkle the seasoning blend evenly over the corn, rotating each ear so every kernel gets some love.

Pro Tip: If you want flavored butter, melt butter with garlic, herbs, or honey and brush it on after cooking for maximum flavor retention.

Step 3: Preheat the Air Fryer (2–3 minutes | Intensity: Easy)

Preheat your air fryer to 390°F (200°C) for 2–3 minutes. Preheating is optional for many air fryer recipes, but it genuinely makes a difference here — it helps the corn start roasting immediately rather than slowly heating up, resulting in better texture and browning.

If your air fryer doesn't have a preheat function, simply run it empty for 2–3 minutes at the same temperature.

Step 4: Arrange the Corn in the Basket (1 minute | Intensity: Easy)

Place the seasoned corn in a single layer in the air fryer basket. Avoid overcrowding — if the ears are stacked on top of each other, they'll steam instead of roast. Depending on your air fryer size, you may need to cook in two batches. A 5.8-quart air fryer typically fits 3–4 ears comfortably; a smaller 2-quart model may only fit 2.

Step 5: Air Fry the Corn (12–15 minutes | Intensity: Easy)

Cook at 390°F (200°C) for 12–15 minutes, flipping the corn halfway through cooking (around the 6–7 minute mark). Flipping ensures even browning on all sides. The corn is done when the kernels are tender and slightly charred in spots, and a knife inserted near the center meets no resistance.

Timing Note: Smaller, thinner ears may be done in 10–12 minutes, while larger, thicker ears might need up to 16 minutes. Always check at the 10-minute mark for your first batch — every air fryer runs slightly differently.

Step 6: Finish and Serve (2 minutes | Intensity: Easy)

Once cooked, remove the corn from the air fryer using tongs. Immediately brush with melted butter (if desired) and sprinkle with fresh herbs, Parmesan, or a squeeze of lime. Serve hot.

Cooking Intensity & Timing Summary

Phase	Time	Temperature	Intensity
Prep & Husking	5 min	—	Easy
Seasoning	2 min	—	Easy
Preheat	2–3 min	390°F	Easy
Air Frying	12–15 min	390°F	Easy
Finishing	2 min	—	Easy
Total	~20 min	390°F	Beginner

Variations

- Mexican Street Corn (Elote): After cooking, brush with mayonnaise, sprinkle with cotija cheese, chili powder, and lime juice.
- Honey Butter Corn: Mix 2 tablespoons melted butter with 1 tablespoon honey and brush on after cooking.
- Spicy Cajun Corn: Add ½ teaspoon Cajun seasoning to the dry rub.

- **Parmesan Herb Corn:** Toss with grated Parmesan and Italian herbs immediately after cooking.
 - **Garlic Butter Corn:** Sauté minced garlic in butter, brush over the corn, and finish with parsley.
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Serving Suggestions

Air fryer corn on the cob pairs beautifully with grilled chicken, BBQ ribs, burgers, or fish tacos. It's also a fantastic addition to grain bowls, salads, and charcuterie boards. For a complete summer plate, serve alongside coleslaw, baked beans, and cornbread.

Storage & Reheating

Refrigerator: Store leftover corn in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

Freezer: For best results, cut kernels off the cob and freeze in a freezer-safe bag for up to 3 months.

Reheating: Reheat in the air fryer at 350°F for 3–4 minutes, or microwave for 60–90 seconds. Avoid reheating in the oven, which can dry out the kernels.

Nutrition Information (Per Ear, Without Added Butter)

	Nutrient	Amount
Calories		~110 kcal

	Nutrient	Amount
Total Fat		5 g
Saturated Fat		0.7 g
Carbohydrates		19 g
Fiber		2.7 g
Sugars		6.4 g
Protein		3.3 g
Sodium		240 mg
Vitamin C		12% DV
Vitamin A		5% DV
Iron		3% DV