



Growing Organic

Wednesday, August 6, 2014

### Review of Isola di Este



PI 433654 Nostrano dell' Isola di Este from Sondrio, Italy

So in my search for the perfect polenta, I gave up trying corn here and instead used GRIN to order the most likely Italian corns. First, Italy is much like California. And Northern Italy is where people eat Polenta. I think this is the 4th in a series of Italian corn. I've had a lot of help from the corn curator for GRIN, Mark Millard. Thanks Mark. I originally planted this corn in 2011 and it was attacked by wild pigs. I was only able to get enough of a crop to save seed to try again. And here it is, a beautiful golden/orange corn.



August 3, 2014

This is the field at harvest.

Planted Mar 27 to trays, Transplanted 4/13. I estimated that it was 122 day corn. I began harvesting on August 2. As you can see about 90% is at the field dry stage. I could have probably pulled this out of the field 15 days ago or earlier. Remember, it's been hot, hot here. How hot? In the 90's almost every day with very very little of our normal 4 days heat and 3 days fog. Someone has stolen the fog.



#### Blog Archive

- ▶ 2015 (11)
- ▼ 2014 (14)
  - ▶ December (2)
  - ▶ November (1)
  - ▼ August (1)
    - Review of Isola di Este
  - ▶ July (3)
  - ▶ June (4)
  - ▶ May (1)
  - ▶ April (1)
  - ▶ March (1)
- ▶ 2013 (31)
- ▶ 2012 (42)
- ▶ 2011 (48)
- ▶ 2010 (77)

#### Followers





August 3

This is a photo of the corn up close and personal at harvest. This corn has the longest silks I have ever seen. Almost every stalk made 2 ears, one large and one small to medium. A large stalk is 12 inches and a small stalk is 8 inches. The interesting thing is that most of the medium stalks were not long and thin, but short and with more rows. This corn had beautiful tight wrappers. Some of the best wrappers I have ever seen. I'm talking fine enough to be tamale wrappers. The cobs were held at about 3' and 4' from the ground. The stalks themselves were about 7'. Not too tall, not too short. This may be the Goldlocks of all the flint corn I have grown.



June 23, 2014

This corn did not lodge. Nope, not even one stalk. Speaking of stalks, the only problem that I see with this corn is that it makes 1 1/2 stalks. Corn is the only major field crop characterized by separate male and female flowering structures, the tassel and ear, respectively. However, in most corn fields it is not unusual to find a few scattered plants with a combination tassel and ear in the same structure - a "tassel ear." The ear portion of this tassel ear structure usually contains only a limited number of kernels. The "Good Tassel Ears appear as miniature corns"

The tassel ears often appear on tillers (suckers) arising from plants with normal ears and tassels. These tassel ears are produced at a terminal position on the tiller where a tassel would normally appear. However, tassel ears may also be produced by individual plants. This is what I call the 1/2 stalk.

Tassel ears are a reminder that the male and female parts of the corn plant are structurally very closely related. Wild progenitors of corn-teosinte spp. have complete flowers tassels and silks together. These can be crossed with Zea mays (normal corn). I suspect this is a very old trait. I have rarely seen this in my fields. However, it is a trait I would select against.





Half stalk with Tassel Ear

Why? They are so cute! Take a close look, the dreaded Huftacoche (corn smut) appeared on all but 2 of these tassel ears. Why? The tassel ears have no wrappers. Wee little birds of the seed eating type come and peck these cute leetle ears. The corn sends out a damage report and huftacoche steps in. I don't like it, I don't have a market for it, and left uncontrolled can run an entire field in short order. So, As these developed, I took a pair of loppers and walked through the maze of maize and lopped them off. All those years my dad made me take the tillers off of corn, maybe he was onto something? Nope, just trying to keep these idle hands out of mischief.



left ear crossed with Kanga Pango. Right ear is a tiller ear

In future years, I would just keep removing the tillers of this corn. I'm also not saving any seed from the tillers. Which leads me to wonder what seed to save.



Of course I'll sort the out the corn with spotty germ, incomplete tip fill and probably ears that I think are too fat, plus anything that was crossed (only the very end row). These will all be ground for polenta. All the very long thin perfect ears that dry quickly is what I'm aiming for. (1, 3 & 6 in this photo).

The corn borers are just beginning in this corn. When I get corn borers, I get pink mold, so I'm in a rush to get this corn out of the field.



Starting to get the hang of it.

The Isola di Este is in the foreground and the Kaanga Pango in the back ground. We had a 90% germination on both. The gophers took a couple so, we ended up with 84 plants. These were placed on 18" emitters and I think that's a good choice for this corn. This corn was not composted at planting, but side dressed on May 11th and given a shot of fish emulsion the week after planting.



May 11th, 2014

Isola di Este as all our corn was irrigated to the standard of approximately 1 gallon per week. The temperature throughout the season has been hot 90+ every day and the evening lows, around 59 F. It's drier than Prohibition here, so I think this is another corn that would be great in a drought. Now, we just have to wait for it to get dry enough to eat.

Once again, I'd like to thank the USDA GRIN program for the germplasm and particularly Mark Millard for his continuing support and encouragement of our search for drought tolerant flint and flour corns. Viva la Polenta!

Coming soon. Photos of of the 3 toed Dar's Drought Tolerant, Isleta Pueblo Blue & Papago.

Posted by Foothill Farm at 5:49 PM

No comments:

Post a Comment

Enter your comment...

Comment as: [Select profile...](#)

[Publish](#)

[Preview](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)