

Nearly Lost Corn Variety Comes Back

Jimmy Red, a nearly lost dent corn landrace variety, has gone from two remaining ears to millions of pounds harvested in a relatively short time. One reason is its all-purpose traits. Selected for Brix (sugar), it makes a premier bourbon. Another selection makes acclaimed cornmeal.

“Like so many landraces, Jimmy Red expressed different traits,” explains Glenn Roberts, Anson Mills.

Roberts has long championed heritage grain and legume landraces once popular in the Southeast. Landraces are varieties that have been selected for desired traits and adapted to a particular area. Roberts has grown rare seeds into quantities sufficient for his own milling company, and he has also shared them with countless others across the country. Rescues include John Haulk, an Appalachian heirloom corn, Carolina Gourdseed White corn and Carolina Gold rice.

He points out that there are only about 30 rice varieties in the U.S. today. He juxtaposes that with more than 100 distinct landraces known within 30 miles of Charleston, S. C. in 1803. His Carolina Gold is one of the few survivors.

Such landrace cultivars not only represent the past but, with their rich genetic heritage, may provide hope for the future. While modern crops are developed for specific growing conditions, landraces adapt to climate change.

“This past season was a rotten year for commercial wheat, but our landrace wheats had a great year,” says Roberts.

In the case of Jimmy Red, Anson credits Ted Chewning with preservation. Chewning,



Jimmy Red heritage corn has become popular with distilleries. It's a 105 to 110-day corn with 10 to 12 in. ears on 8 to 10-ft. tall stalks.

a seed saver and advocate of seed sharing, lives on James Island, S.C. A family there had long grown Jimmy Red to make moonshine. When they stopped, they gave a few ears of the corn to Chewning. He grew them out and shared some with Roberts and others who rebuilt reserves of the unique landrace over the next 18 years and put them to use in restaurants and distilleries alike.

“Ted and I selected four or five separate cultivars, which I kept distinct,” says Roberts. “Ted put them all back together and focused on milling traits.”

Chewning shared his with Charleston chef Sean Brock, who made it a nationally recognized celebrity cultivar. Roberts shared the darkest and sweetest selection with Scott Blackwell of High Wire Distilling. In 2014, 2 1/2 acres were grown out. Over the next two

years, Blackwell turned that into 570 bottles of bourbon. It sold out in 11 min.

“This past fall, Sean harvested 218,000 lbs. of Jimmy Red, and High Wire Distillery has contracted more than a million pounds for 2022,” says Roberts. “Sean’s cultivar is the best for milling, while the best ‘hooch’ corn is always the darkest and heaviest test weight.”

Roberts’ cultivars run 63-lb. test weight on average with yields of 50 to 70 bushels per acre. Jimmy Red is a 105 to 115-day corn with 10 to 12-in. ears on 8 to 10-ft. tall plants. The sugars that made it ideal for moonshine also make it good for eating fresh roasted or mated and ground for meal and grits.

To grow and develop his own collections and encourage others to do the same, Roberts has worked with seed preservationists, as well as USDA and university researchers. He occasionally shares rice seed with farmers in the U.S. South, as well as for biosecurity for underserved communities internationally.

Roberts doesn’t sell seed, but he does share it with various heirloom seed companies like FEDCO Seeds and Baker Creek Seeds, non-profits like the Southern Seed Exchange and other low-profit seed providers.

“We choose to give the seed away to these groups to keep it in the public domain,” says Roberts. “We’ve donated seed in some way or other to pretty much all the seed companies in the East, Midwest and even the Southwest.”

Roberts encourages people to try growing heritage varieties in their areas. However, he notes that local conditions affect flavor. Sometimes flavor can change within a field.

“Mineral changes in the soil within a 30-ft. distance can change the flavor,” he explains. “Landraces react to micro sweet spots and



High Wire Distillery uses Jimmy Red corn for its dark color and heavy test weight.

alter the taxonomy, including height and leaf size. In native cultures, seeds were hand-selected for how they would react to an area.”

“If FARM SHOW readers can’t find it elsewhere, I do offer 100 true type, Jimmy Red starter seeds to farmers who develop their own crops,” offers Roberts. “It has been grown successfully in the middle Hudson Valley, Missouri, southeast Texas and I understand also on the West Coast. It expresses its traits perfectly everywhere, even up to 5,000-ft. elevation, if there is enough heat for the season.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Anson Mills, 1922 C Gervais St., Columbia, S.C. 29201 (ph 803-467-4122; www.ansonmills.com) or Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co., 2278 Baker Creek Rd., Mansfield, Mo. 65704 (ph 417-924-8917; seeds@rareseeds.com; www.rareseeds.com) or Marsh Hen Mill, 2995 Hwy 174, Edisto Island, S.C. 29438 (ph 843-603-0074; www.marshhenmill.com).

Pastured Poultry Producers Share Ideas On Getting Feed To The Field

If you have a question about raising pastured poultry, the American Pastured Poultry Producers Association (APPPA) is the place to go. The non-profit group encourages the production, processing, marketing, and purchasing of poultry raised on pasture. Members can list their farms on the Get Real Chicken directory and view virtual educational programs live. However, a key benefit is being able to take part in the online members-only discussion group.

This is where a member can post a question and get responses from other members, people who pasture birds themselves. A good example was a recent question about the best way to deliver feed from super sacks to range feeders in the pasture.

The question was posed by a member who wanted to dump the super sack feed into a feed cart with 7-ft. tall sides.

A response came quickly from member Dave. He suggested taking advantage of a steep terrain change and grading it out to make a lower area to set the feed cart. If farming on flat ground, building a loading dock and ramp was suggested, especially if it could be used for other purposes. He also shared that a friend installed a doubled-up plywood deck on a pallet with a hole for the super sack spout drilled through it. This made it possible to lift the sack with pallet forks rather than by the sack’s lifting straps.

Member Brandon noted that his best investment this season was for a bottom bulk container from Bulk Containers Express (www.bulkcontainerexpress.com). He said it was easy to auger into and safer and easier to work with than super sacks.

Jeff suggested a DIY solution, using used IBC totes. He cuts off the tops, adds a small sliding door in the bottom and stores his bulk feed in them. He can easily move them to the



A used IBC tote with the top cut off and a small sliding door added to the bottom stores bulk feed and can be moved with pallet forks.

field with pallet forks as needed to fill feeders.

Keith advised considering a Grain-O-Vator (www.grainovator.com) such as he purchased and uses which avoids super sacks altogether.

Even non-members can benefit from APPPA. The organization has posted more than 20 videos to YouTube. These are available to anyone and cover a wide variety of poultry pasturing topics.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Pastured Poultry Producers Association, P.O. Box 85, Hughesville, Penn. 17737 (ph 888-662-7772; grit@appa.org; www.apppa.org).



Whicker’s converted bin allows him to drive in and quickly hook up to the right accessory.

Converted Grain Bin Stores Attachments

James Whicker used to get frustrated by the sight of his 11 skid steer attachments sitting along a nearby fence, exposed to the weather. He finally came up with an unusual storage idea.

He bought an unused 30-ft. dia. steel grain bin from a neighbor and, after cutting a large hole in the wall for a doorway, he removed the perforated metal aeration floor. About 500 cement blocks supporting the metal floor were also removed to expose the original concrete. Whicker rented a scissor lift for a series of tasks which included taking down two augers from the ceiling, steam cleaning and power washing the interior, and then painting the walls a bright Caterpillar yellow.

Whicker hired a professional to grind the cement floor to a smooth finish and then applied a black epoxy with a gold and silver metal flake to the surface. An auger that originally went across the bottom of the grain bin was cut in half and the pieces were set in concrete to be used as pillars standing on either side of the entryway.

An electrician friend wired exterior lights

to be able to see while moving equipment into the bin at night, plus 11 vapor-proof lights around the interior walls, all neatly installed and finished with armored cable.

Whicker mounted an 11-ft. square chain lift garage door in the opening.

“The hardest part was probably the door,” he says. “I cut big timbers about 6-in. square that reach close to the top, notched them out, and made a lap joint. Getting it in straight was a little tough. Taking out the original floor wasn’t easy either as there was a lot of steel and all those cement blocks.”

His skid-steer attachments are placed around the interior walls leaving plenty of room to drive inside, pivot in the center and hook up to the needed accessory.

“It was a fair amount of work overall, but it turned out nice,” Whicker says. “Especially the floor, which looks great. I wanted it to look industrial and I think I nailed it.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, James Whicker, 123 W. County Rd., Clayton, Ind. 46118 (ph 317-410-5541; jwhicker54@gmail.com).