

HOME DINING RECREATION TRAVEL COMMUNITY HEALTH STYLE

# 805 LIVING

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## A SEASON *of* GIVING

# NEW TAKES ON THE TITIAN TUBER

When it comes to sweet potatoes this Thanksgiving, follow the lead of local chefs and think outside the casserole.

BY JAIME LEWIS

**ROASTING SWEET POTATOES** beneath a layer of marshmallows in a casserole isn't the only way to make the Thanksgiving mainstays delicious. In fact, chefs up and down the Central Coast tap into sweet potatoes' fundamental warmth to bring vibrant color and pillowy texture to a global panoply of dishes.

At Twenty88 Wine Bistro ([twenty88.com](http://twenty88.com)) in Camarillo, executive chef Alex Castillo blends sweet potatoes into a soup with a jalapeño kick, while at Café Nouveau ([cafenouveau.net](http://cafenouveau.net)) in Ventura co-owner Tes Wolf bakes a mashed sweet potato into the restaurant's popular biscuits. Vincent Lee, executive chef at Kaishin Malibu ([kaishinmalibu.com](http://kaishinmalibu.com)), fries wedges of sweet potato to toss with spicy green beans and ginger, and Emilie Goldstein, pastry chef at Big Sky Cafe ([bigskycfe.com](http://bigskycfe.com)) in San Luis Obispo, uses the orange spud as the foundation for a gooey, caramel-topped flan.

Interested in bringing some of their sweet inspiration to your Thanksgiving table? Try the recipes here.

## SWEET POTATO BISCUITS

*These tender biscuits from Tes Wolf, co-owner of Café Nouveau in Ventura, get their slight sweetness and blush of color from roasted sweet potatoes. Tip: To cut down preparation time, roast the sweet potato in advance, perhaps when the oven is on for another dish, and then mash it with the milk and brown sugar. The mashed sweet potato can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to three days and left cold or brought to room temperature to make the biscuits.*

Makes 12 three-inch biscuits

### Nonstick cooking spray

- 1 large sweet potato (yields 1 cup mashed sweet potato)
- 1/3 cup whole milk, plus more as needed
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small bits

Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Poke holes in sweet potato, place it on prepared baking sheet, and roast in the oven until soft, about 35 to 40 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool.

Increase oven temperature to 425°F.

Remove and discard sweet potato skin and mash flesh. Measure 1 cup of mashed sweet potato into a small bowl, reserving excess for another use. Whisk in 1/3 cup of milk and brown sugar. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together 1 1/2 cups flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Cut in butter with a pastry cutter until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add sweet potato mixture and fold gently to combine. Add more milk a little at a time as needed until dough comes together. (The amount of milk needed depends on how moist the sweet potato is.)

Sprinkle a small handful of flour on a clean work surface. Turn dough out onto floured surface and knead gently 2 to 3 times with the palm of your hand. Pat dough into a 1/2-inch-thick round. Using a 3-inch biscuit cutter or a drinking glass, cut dough into 12 rounds and place on prepared baking sheet. Bake until biscuits are light golden brown and firm to the touch, about 12 to 14 minutes.

## STIR-FRIED STRING BEANS WITH SWEET POTATO

*You won't find this dish on the menu at Kaishin Malibu Chinese restaurant in Malibu Colony Plaza, but you need only ask for it. "Everything at Kaishin is the customer's choice," says owner Sacha Fattahi. "The menu is just a guide." Apparently word has gotten out about this dish, because Fattahi says it's extremely popular.*

*"The sweetness of the [sweet] potatoes and the spice of the XO sauce are what make it special," he says. Executive chef Vincent Lee uses the house version of XO sauce, a thick Chinese condiment—which he makes with dried scallops, dried shrimp, oyster sauce, garlic, and red pepper—to bump up the umami factor in stir-fries. To make this dish at home, substitute commercial XO sauce, available at Asian markets and from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).*

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish

- 1/2 pound sweet potato (1 small or half of a large sweet potato), peeled and thinly sliced
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 1/4 pounds green beans, trimmed
- 1/2 cup XO sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely minced
- 6 green onions, chopped, white and green parts divided
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Salt to taste

Bring water to boil in a medium saucepan. Add sweet potato slices to boiling water and cook 1 minute. Remove from heat.

Heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a wok or a large, well-seasoned skillet over medium-high heat. Add green beans to wok and sauté for 1 minute. Add 2 remaining tablespoons vegetable oil to wok. Using a slotted spoon, transfer boiled sweet potato slices to wok, >



The classic: hot roasted sweet potatoes, topped with butter and brown sugar. For a bready riff on this beloved flavor combination, try Café Nouveau's Sweet Potato Biscuits, fresh from the oven (see recipe, opposite).

**A SUPERIOR SPUD** *With 400 percent of the recommended daily value for vitamin A in the form of the antioxidant beta-carotene, a single sweet potato also provides more fiber and fewer calories and carbohydrates than its Irish potato counterpart.*



reserving hot water in saucepan. Sauté sweet potato slices with green beans for 30 seconds. Working quickly, remove vegetables from wok with slotted spoon and transfer them to hot water remaining in saucepan to rinse off excess oil. Drain vegetables and return them to wok over medium-high heat.

Add XO sauce, garlic, white parts of green onions, red pepper flakes, and salt. Stir to coat vegetables with sauce and sauté briefly for 30 seconds. Transfer vegetables to a serving dish. Serve, garnished with remaining green onions.

### CURRIED SWEET POTATO SOUP WITH CRISPY JALAPEÑOS

*"I lean toward seasonal, vegetarian soups," says executive chef Alex Castillo of Twenty 88 Wine Bistro in Camarillo. At the restaurant he uses carrots in this spiced-up Moroccan-inspired potage, but for Thanksgiving he substitutes sweet potatoes. "I added the jalapeños at the end," he says, "because I like a little spice, a little crunch on top."*

Serves 6

#### CRISPY JALAPEÑOS

- ½ cup all-purpose flour**
- Pinch salt**
- Pinch pepper**
- 3 red jalapeños, seeded, ribs removed, and thinly sliced**
- Canola or vegetable oil, for frying**

#### SOUP

- 1½ pounds orange-fleshed sweet potatoes**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 5 celery stalks, chopped**

- 1 two-inch piece fresh ginger root, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 1 tablespoon yellow curry powder**
- ⅓ cup packed brown sugar**
- 1 15-ounce can unsweetened coconut milk**
- 3 cups vegetable broth**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon sea salt**
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil**
- Fresh cilantro, chopped, for garnish**

**To make crispy jalapeños:** In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, and pepper. Moisten jalapeño slices in water. Dredge each slice in flour mixture. Add ½-inch vegetable oil to skillet and heat oil until deep-fry thermometer registers 350°F. Working in batches, drop in jalapeño slices without crowding them, fry, and use a slotted spoon to flip once, until golden and crispy on both sides. Remove slices from skillet and drain on paper towels. Set aside.

**To make soup:** Preheat oven to 400°F. Line heavy rimmed baking sheet with foil. Poke holes in sweet potatoes, place on baking sheet, and roast until soft, 40 to 45 minutes. Remove from oven and allow sweet potatoes to cool.

Heat vegetable oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery, and ginger; cook and stir until tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in curry powder and brown sugar. Whisk in coconut milk and broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 10 minutes, uncovered, stirring occasionally.

Remove and discard the skins from the cooled sweet potatoes and cut the flesh into bite-size pieces. Add sweet potatoes to soup mixture and cook for 5 more minutes.

Stir in lemon juice and season with salt. In a blender, puree soup in batches (careful, it's hot) on medium speed until smooth or use an immersion blender. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish with crispy sliced jalapeños, a drizzle of sesame oil, and chopped cilantro.

### SWEET POTATO FLAN

*"I always try to do traditional desserts with a Big Sky twist—we like to get a little weird," says Big Sky Cafe kitchen manager and pastry chef, Emilie Goldstein, creator of this flan recipe. "We try to find some way to make it interesting whether it be an unexpected ingredient or a variation in the way something is served." Note: To keep the flan from sticking to the pan, cover the sides of the pan with the caramel sauce as directed before pouring in the sweet potato mixture.*

Serves 8

- 2 medium sweet potatoes (to make 2 cups puree)**
- ¾ cup granulated sugar**
- ¼ cup hot water**
- 5 eggs, beaten**
- 1½ cups coconut milk**
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed**
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced**
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**

Place a rack in the center of oven and preheat oven to 350°F. Line large rimmed baking sheet with foil. Poke holes in sweet potatoes and place them on prepared baking sheet. Roast until soft, about 40 minutes. Remove from oven and allow sweet potatoes to cool.

Meanwhile, in a small, heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine granulated sugar with ¼ cup hot water to make a mixture the consistency of wet sand. Bring the sugar and water to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cook until sugar dissolves, thickens, and reaches a deep amber color, stirring constantly to avoid burning. Carefully pour the hot caramel sauce into a 9-inch pie or cake pan with 1½-inch-high sides. Turn the pan to coat the sides with caramel sauce, and set aside.

Remove and discard the skins of the cooled sweet potatoes. Puree the flesh in food processor until smooth. Measure 2 cups of puree (reserve excess for another use) into a large mixing bowl. Add eggs, coconut milk, brown sugar, ginger, and cinnamon to sweet potato puree, and whisk together until smooth. Pour custard into the caramel-coated pie or cake pan. Place pan in a large roasting pan with high sides. Fill roasting pan with enough hot water to come halfway up the sides of the pie or cake pan. Carefully place nested pans in the oven, and bake until flan is barely set, about 50 minutes.

Remove flan from oven, and let cool to room temperature. To release it from the pan, run a knife around the edges of the flan and invert it gently onto a large plate before serving. ♦