

CITY KITCHEN

Yes, Succotash Has a Luxurious Side

By David Tanis

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Succotash, that savory mélange of corn and beans, is a noble dish with a long history. We have 17th-century Native Americans to thank for it; they introduced the stew to the struggling colonial immigrants. Composed of ingredients unknown in Europe at the time, it gradually became a standard meal in the settlers' kitchens.

The name is a somewhat Anglicized spelling of the Narragansett Indian word "msickquatash," which referred to a simmering pot of corn to which other ingredients were added.



Evan Sung for The New York Times

Most often, it contained corn, beans and squash, the Three Sisters, which the natives cultivated together in distinct mounds. There was winter succotash, made from dried corn, dried beans and pumpkin; or summer succotash, made with fresh sweet corn, shelling beans and tender summer squash. Fresh or dried meat or fish were common additions.

Fast-forward a century or two, and succotash evolved to become a side dish rather than the meal itself. Any number of variations now exist, the two constants being corn and beans — usually, but not always, lima beans, originally from Peru.

Succotash made the rounds. Ask folks from the Northeast and you will be told that succotash is of Yankee origin. In the South, it is considered to be a purely regional creation.

Evan Sung for The New York Times

In many recipes, salted pork belly or bacon is favored, while others call for milk, butter or cream. Some recipes use both or require tomatoes or pimentos from a jar.

If you grew up with 20th-century Midwestern succotash, you may remember it as I do: a sickly, bland offering from the steam table in the high school cafeteria, prepared by opening a No. 10 can and boiling the contents. That's how succotash earned its often-maligned status.

But I'm here to tell you that succotash can be the most marvelous vegetable stew imaginable. At its best, it is a celebration of summer ingredients.

My version includes zucchini, peppers and green tomato along with sweet tender corn kernels and fresh shelling beans: limas, cranberry beans or black-eye peas.

For special occasions, I push the envelope with a fancy version of succotash, taking liberties with the traditional approach. I add chunks of lobster and a dollop of crème fraîche, which effectively transforms it from a humble side dish to a deluxe starter or even a main course. No one complains.

Recipes: **Lobster Succotash** | **Lobster Recipes** | **Corn Recipes**