

FLAVORS OF NEW ENGLAND



The locavore movement has finally hit New England. New farms, greenmarkets, and gourmet food shops are sprouting up everyday and chefs are exploring more seasonably-based, farm-to-table options.

New England's Natural Bounty

With the long stretches of fertile farmland and the Atlantic Ocean, the region has many natural food sources.

Fruit: Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries grow wild (and on farms) all over the northeast in summertime. Concord grapes started growing in the namesake Massachusetts village way back in 1849. Autumn brings sugar pumpkins and an array of regional apple varieties. Cranberries are cultivated on marshy bogs, mostly in Massachusetts.

Vegetables: Local farmers grow many different kinds of vegetables (and veggie-like fruits). Big, colorful piles of sweet corn, squash, zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, gourds, potatoes, beets, asparagus, peas, beans, mushrooms, and rhubarb appear at farm stands and markets throughout summer and fall.

Dairy: Milk and cream from the region's dairy farms are used in chowders, bisques, and cream-based sauces; in cheeses, like the famous Vermont cheddars; and in ice cream and yogurt.

Seafood: There is a sizeable fishing industry in the northeast. People here consume cod, haddock, halibut, scrod, bass, and trout, as well as shellfish, such as lobster, steamers, quahogs, scallops, mussels, and oysters.

By Land or By Sea

New England cuisine has always had a somewhat austere, no-frills reputation (like the people), and that simplicity is still present today.

Thanksgiving Dinner: The most traditional Yankee food has got to be from our national day of feasting: roasted turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, gravy, bread-based stuffing, baked winter squash, and boiled turnips with apple or pumpkin pie, and Indian pudding for dessert.

Boiled Dinner: Perhaps the second most well-known dinner in New England is the one that's traditionally served on St. Patrick's Day: hunks of corned beef and cabbage simmered in a pot with potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions, and broth.

Coastal Cuisine: Look for fish dishes, steamed lobster, lobster bisque, and lobster rolls; chowders; crab cakes; baskets of fried clams, shrimp, and scallops; steamers; oysters; or clam bakes/boils.

Sweets: Blueberry pancakes with maple syrup, muffins, pumpkin bread, or fried cornmeal johnnycakes for breakfast. For dessert: apples baked into pies, crisps, and brown betties or pressed into cider. Berry pies and strawberry shortcake are also popular. Mainers love whoopie pies, which are cake-like chocolate sandwiches stuffed with frosting. Vermonters are big on maple sugar candy, while Rhode Islanders like to sip their frappes, or "cabinets." And everybody loves ice cream.

Spices: The flavors of New England cuisine were historically derived from the fresh and unadorned ingredients used to create it; however, certain spices, such as black pepper, basil, oregano, bay leaf, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, and nutmeg, are often used in New England dishes.

Beantown: Let's not forget about Boston baked beans slow-cooked with salt pork and molasses!