

# Yam it Up with this Spicy Sweet Potato Dish

By Susie Iventosch



Sweet potatoes ("yams") with Mexican spice, peppers, toasted pumpkin seeds and baked skins  
Photos Susie Iventosch



Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and [www.taxbites.net](http://www.taxbites.net). Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com).

**This recipe can be found on our website:** [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com).

If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



This dish has its inspiration from one I recently shared with my son in Austin, Texas at a restaurant named Odd Duck. The place specializes in small plates, and after we ordered this tasty dish, we wished we had more. So, naturally, we ordered a second one, but by the time it arrived, we realized we were going to have to save it for a leftover day. When you order three or four, those small dishes can really creep up on you.

The menu indicated that the dish was made with sweet potatoes, but in looking back, I realize that their "sweet potato" must have been a yam, because it was so orange in color. This prompted me to look into the difference between sweet potatoes and yams. I had always thought that a sweet potato was blond in color, while the yam was a more vibrant orange, but both were similar in shape. After all, this is how they are always labeled in the produce departments.

Well, it turns out that we have been fooled all along. Both of these root vegetables are actually sweet potatoes, but the USDA labels the orange sweet potatoes "yams" in order to differentiate between the two. In actuality, a yam is an African root vegetable, much larger in size, and with a rough, bark-like skin and starchy white, purple or reddish-colored flesh.

So, even though this dish is named after the sweet potato, be sure to pick the orange ones, or "yams" as we commonly refer to them! I made it the first time with the whiter sweet potato and it just wasn't as good as the second attempt, which was made with the "yam" sweet potato.

## RECIPE

(Makes 6 for a side dish)

### INGREDIENTS

2 "yams" (sweet potatoes)  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 teaspoon Mexican seasoning of your choice (you can make your own, recipe to follow)  
Salt to taste  
1 poblano pepper or Anaheim, seeded and thinly sliced and cut into small pieces

### Garnish

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro  
2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds, toasted  
Crunchy baked sweet potato skins  
1 tablespoon crumbled goat or blue cheese (optional)  
Plain yogurt  
Lime wedges

### DIRECTIONS

Scrub sweet potatoes well. Remove any bad spots with a paring knife. Peel and reserve skins. Cut sweet potatoes into bite-sized cubes. Place in a skillet and toss with olive oil, spices and salt. Cook, uncovered, over medium-high heat for about five minutes, until slightly browned on the edges. Cover, reduce heat to low and cook until tender when pierced with a knife. Remove from heat. Add peppers to sweet potatoes and toss. Meanwhile, cut the skins into small pieces and toss with olive oil and sea salt. Bake at 350F for about 5 minutes, or until crispy. Remove from oven.

Serve sweet potatoes onto plates, and garnish with skins, toasted pumpkin seeds, cilantro, cheese crumbles, a dollop of plain yogurt and a sprinkle of fresh squeezed lime. (Or you can toss all but the yogurt in a large bowl and serve from there!)

### Mexican Spice

(Adapt to your taste: hotter, milder, more garlic, less, etc.)

1-2 teaspoons paprika  
1 teaspoon powdered cumin  
½ teaspoon powdered coriander  
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper  
¼ teaspoon chili powder  
¼ teaspoon garlic powder  
¼ teaspoon onion powder (or ½ teaspoon dried minced onion)  
½ teaspoon oregano or thyme  
½ teaspoon sea salt

## Day Trippin'

# Plan a Holiday 'Staycation' in San Francisco

By Fran Miller



Holiday decorations adorn the outside and inside of the InterContinental Mark Hopkins hotel in San Francisco



Photos courtesy InterContinental Mark Hopkins

If the suggestion of a day or night in San Francisco causes a "been there, done that" shrug of the shoulders, 'tis the season to head back over the bridge. This is a magical time in the city, and there is no better way to summon some holiday spirit than by wandering the streets among fellow revelers and partaking of the eclectic festivities. From breathtaking city views via a luxe vantage point, to holiday tea at a grand hotel, to time honored tourist attractions, give yourself 24 hours to explore, and you'll come home with a renewed sense of pride in being San Francisco's across-the-bridge neighbor.

A great home base is the InterContinental. Located at 5th and Howard streets, it is the newest, built from the ground up hotel in the city. It is modern and spacious with fantastic floor-to-ceiling window views, and, it is eco-conscious. Guests are invited to actively participate in sustainable practices via the 'LEED By Example' vacation package that can earn you discounts for reusing towels, taking public transportation, and opting for in-room Green Eco temperature control. (Tip: Treat yourself by paying a little extra per person for access to the 6th floor Club Lounge where an array of food and beverages are available for the taking, day and night.)

The InterContinental is just around the corner from some of

the city's best shopping and greatest public spaces. Check off everyone on your gift list with a trip to Westfield San Francisco Centre and then catch a movie at Metreon, or slip on your ice skates and glide around Yerba Buena Gardens' ice rink. Let the kids run free in the Yerba Buena Children's Garden play circle and maze while you sip an eggnog latte and take in the spectacular skyline view.

Just a 15-minute walk through Union Square and up Nob Hill is the InterContinental's sister hotel, the venerable Mark Hopkins and its celebrated Top of the Mark restaurant. This is where you will find old school holiday pleasures, such as a traditional Thanksgiving feast, served 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thanksgiving day and featuring piano entertainment and a Little Explorer petting zoo in the hotel's lobby. Starting Dec. 5, the Mark offers its Magical Holiday Tea, an amusing family-friendly event featuring a magician, a face painter, a cookie decorating station, a fire engine display in the courtyard, and visits from Santa. Those who bring a toy donation receive a \$4 discount. (The Mark also offers a special Christmas Eve dinner, Christmas day brunch, and a New Year's Eve party. See their website for details.)

If a consumer-free experience is more your style, head over to Pacific Heights and walk the Lyon Street Steps. Start at the

top at Broadway and Lyon and take in the sprawling bay view before making your way down toward the water. You will pass some of San Francisco's most spectacular homes, Letterman Digital Arts Center, and the Palace of Fine Arts – and you will wonder why you do not do this more often. On your way back up, stop at Sessions at the Presidio just inside the Presidio's Chestnut Gate for a thirst quencher. Sessions offers more than 100 beers; enjoy one on their heated patio overlooking Letterman's bucolic gardens.

If you plan to take public transportation and/or visit some of the city's museums, consider purchasing a CityPASS, which provides unlimited rides on all cable cars, Muni buses and Muni rail for seven consecutive days. CityPASS saves you 45 percent off of admission prices for The California Academy of Sciences, Aquarium of the Bay, The Exploratorium or the de Young Legion of Honor. And CityPASS holders get to skip entrance lines (except for cable cars). You can purchase the CityPASS at any of the featured venues, online at [CityPASS.com](http://CityPASS.com), or at [SanFrancisco.travel](http://SanFrancisco.travel) – a wonderful resource for anyone visiting the city.

For further details and reservation information, visit [www.intercontinentalsanfrancisco.com](http://www.intercontinentalsanfrancisco.com), [www.intercontinentalmarkhopkins.com](http://www.intercontinentalmarkhopkins.com), [CityPass.com](http://CityPass.com), [SanFrancisco.travel](http://SanFrancisco.travel).

## Business Directory

### Advertise

Reach 60,000+  
in Lamorinda

Advertise in  
Lamorinda Weekly  
Call 925-377-0977  
today

### Heating

**ATLAS**  
HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING COMPANY  
CA LIC. #489501

Present this coupon for  
**\$35 off any service.**  
\*May not be combined with any other offer. Expires 12/31/2015.

**925-944-1122**  
[www.atlasheating.com](http://www.atlasheating.com) Since 1908

### Underpinning

**Bay Area UNDERPINNING**  
GENERAL CONTRACTOR LIC. #87128

**BUILDING FOUNDATIONS • LIFTING  
LEVELING • STABILIZING**

**707 310-0602**  
[www.bayareaunderpinning.org](http://www.bayareaunderpinning.org)

### Gardening

**J. Limon Gardening**

Maintenance/Clean-up  
Monthly Service  
Sprinkler  
System Repair

**Call Jose**  
**(925) 787-5743**  
License #: 018287

25 yrs. experience  
in Lamorinda