

# Insider

## POPPED WATER LILY SEEDS: A BETTER-FOR-YOU, CRUNCHY SNACK

Eating popped water lily seeds may seem adventurous, but in India it's been consumed for centuries and is as commonplace as popcorn or potato chips. The ancient super seed, when puffed, is a canvas for flavorings and a nutritious, low-fat snack, and rising in popularity here. The Atlanta company Route To India produces Yoga Pops, popped water lily seeds hand-roasted and well-seasoned in small batches. They come in three varieties: one spiced with truffle oil and dried porcini mushroom powder; another dusted with curry powder and spicy; and a third, sweet from cara-



mel jaggery (evaporated cane juice) and laced with cardamom, cinnamon, and clove (\$5.99 for a 1-ounce bag). Owners Anita Balakrishnan and Nalini Mehta, both born in India, say the flavorings stand true to Ayurveda, the ancient system of health and wellness they practice. "In India, the popped

seeds are known as an energy booster," says Mehta, who's worked for years as a caterer, taught Ayurvedic cooking classes and gives lectures on the subject. She also won a James Beard Foundation Women In Culinary Leadership Grant. Mehta came up with the flavorings when she was hosting pop-up dinners and served the popped seeds as a cocktail snack. As we stay at home, we may be munching on fatty treats. The popped water lily seeds, with 120 to 160 calories per bag, are a better-for-you, crunchy snack. To order, go to [www.routetoindia.com](http://www.routetoindia.com).

ANN TRIEGER KURLAND

## PODCAST REVEALS WHAT LOCAL CHEFS ARE DOING, AND HOW THEY'RE COPING

The Food Lens, a go-to website when you're scouting for where to eat or drink around Boston, also runs a podcast series. The episodes feature interviews with food industry notables. The site just kicked off a mini-season that's pivoted to talks with chefs and others in the food community opening up on how they're coping in the wake of COVID-19. The host is Catherine Smart, a former contributor to the Globe food section and a cast member of Milk Street TV and contributor to Milk Street Radio. Episode 1 features Ming Tsai, chef-owner of Blue Dragon in the Seaport, who is preparing meals with his family and has also partnered with the Lee Initiative, turning his location into a food bank for restaurant workers. In Episode 2, we hear from chef Jamie Bissonette, of Toro, Coppa, and Little Donkey, who is working

with Off Their Plate, providing meals to front-line health care workers. Lauren Friel of wine bar Rebel Rebel tells her story in a third show. "People are listening because they miss the world of food and dining out, and want to keep in touch with what their favorite chefs are doing," says Smart. "It's a distraction." The conversations are intimate about the challenges the guests are facing. You'll find a new episode every Wednesday; each is under 30 minutes.

To listen, go to [www.thefoodlens.com/boston/podcast/](http://www.thefoodlens.com/boston/podcast/). The podcasts are also available on Apple Podcasts, Podbean, Stitcher, and other platforms.

ANN TRIEGER KURLAND



## LOCAL SALT FLAKES SO FEATHERY THEY MELT ONTO FOOD

Duxbury Saltworks produces snowy-white salt flakes so soft and feathery they melt onto food. Owner Lily Leedom started making salt several years ago after moving to Duxbury with her family from Portland, Ore. "We have a gorgeous bay here with oysters that clean the water," says Leedom. She first used a conventional approach by scooping the seawater into buckets and letting it evaporate. Now, the company shares space at Island Creek Oysters' 11-acre waterfront campus in Duxbury and pumps in the pristine ocean water filled with millions of oysters. "We triple filter the water, so nothing is left but salt and minerals," she says. Leedom works with her team of seven women to hand-harvest the delicate fleur de sel-style sea salt in small batches and then bring its fresh, pure flavor to your table. Available at Flat of The Hill, 60 Charles St., Boston, 617-619-9917; Cardullo's Gourmet Shoppe, 6 Brattle St., Cambridge, 617-491-8888; Boston General Store, 305 Harvard St., Brookline, 617-232-0103 and 626 High St., Dedham, 781-326-7560; Brothers Marketplace locations, or go to [duxburysaltworks.com](http://duxburysaltworks.com).

ANN TRIEGER KURLAND

## THE CONFIDENT COOK

GOOD FOOD AND KITCHEN KNOW-HOW



SALLY PASLEY VARGAS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

## British flapjacks (not related to our pancakes) are exceptionally crunchy oat squares

British flapjacks have nothing to do with American pancakes. Sometimes called "traybakes" in the UK (because they're baked in a rectangular pan), flapjacks are akin to our bar cookies. These buttery oat squares have a crunchy texture and an irresistible butterscotch flavor, which makes them a popular treat. And then there's the ease of preparation. They come together in about 10 minutes and take another 25 minutes to bake. No arguments there. In addition, they are made without flour, a commodity rarer than toilet paper in these crazy days of pandemic baking.

Golden syrup, most commonly used to make flapjacks, is replaced here by light corn syrup (like Karo syrup) and this is what holds the bars together. (Don't confuse it with white ultra-sweet high-fructose corn syrup used in commercial baked goods.) Light corn syrup acts in the same way that golden syrup, brown rice syrup, or barley syrup do. These syrups have a high viscosity and

are slightly less cloyingly sweet than maple syrup or honey, which don't make good substitutes, since the bars become stickier and softer and end up being overly sweet. At the end of the day, it's the crunch that counts, and these flapjacks have that in spades.

SALLY PASLEY VARGAS

### British Flapjacks

Makes 9 squares or 18 triangles

- Butter (for the pan)
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into chunks
- ½ cup light or dark-brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange rind
- 2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats

1. Set the oven at 350 degrees. Butter an 8-inch square pan. Line it with parchment paper cut to fit, leaving a 1-inch overhang on 2 sides of the pan.

2. In a large saucepan over medium heat, combine the butter, brown sugar, corn syrup, vanilla, and salt. Bring to a simmer, and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the sugar dissolves.
3. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the orange rind and oats until combined.
4. Pour the mixture into the baking pan and level with the back of a spoon, pushing it into the corners.
5. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the square is golden and bubbly. Set the baking dish on a wire rack to cool for 10 minutes, or until the bubbles settle and the square is still warm, but firm enough to remove from the pan in one piece. Using the parchment as handles, transfer the whole piece to a cutting board.
6. While the flapjacks are still warm, use a large, sharp knife, to make 2 vertical and 2 horizontal cuts to form 9 squares. Leave the squares whole, or cut each square into triangles or fingers if you want smaller pieces. Let rest on the cutting board until completely cool. The flapjacks will crisp as they cool.

Sally Pasley Vargas

## James Beard Foundation announces award nominees

By Devra First  
GLOBE STAFF

With the restaurant industry severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the James Beard Foundation postponed a planned March announcement of the nominees for its annual awards, which honor the country's best restaurants and chefs. Monday the foundation announced those nominees. May 4 would have been the date of the awards ceremony, this year marking its 30th anniversary.

"We consulted with chefs, restaurateurs, and industry professionals from across the country to get their perspective on what the industry wanted and needed right now," says Mitchell Davis, the foundation's chief strategy officer, in a statement. "It was clear that those whose work in 2019 led them to be selected as a semifinalist — and perhaps ultimately a nominee or a winner — deserved the recognition they earned. Those we consulted felt the Awards could also offer a glimmer of hope to an industry looking for light in a very dark time."

The list of nominees makes clear two things for this region: Boston's reputation as a stronghold for women chefs is well founded. And people really love to eat in and around Portland, Maine.

The Boston-area nominees for Best Chef: Northeast are **Tiffani Faison** of Orfano and **Cassie Piurma** of Sarma. The remainder are Mainers: **Krista Kern Desjarlais** of The Purple House, **Vien Dobui** of CÔNG TU BOT, **Ben Jackson** of Drifters Wife, and **Greg Mitchell** and **Chad Conley** of Palace Diner.

The regional nominees in national award categories are **Karen Akunowicz**'s Fox & the Knife for Best New Restaurant, **Maura Kilpatrick** of Sofra for Outstanding Baker, **Ana Sortun** of Oleana for Outstanding Chef, **Jamie Bissonette** and **Ken Oringer** of JK Food Group (Little Donkey, Toro, Coppa) for Outstanding Restaurateur,

and **Irene Li** of Mei Mei for Rising Star Chef.

The nominees for James Beard Foundation Book Awards were also announced. Local nominees include **Joanne Chang** in the category of Baking and Desserts, for "Pastry Love: A Baker's Journal of Favorite Recipes"; **Christopher Kimball** in the General category, for "Milk Street: The New Rules: Recipes That Will Change the Way You Cook"; and the editors at America's Test Kitchen in the Vegetable-Focused Cooking category, for "Vegetables Illustrated: An In-



**Tiffani Faison and Christopher Kimball are among the local nominees.**

spiring Guide With 700+ Kitchen-Tested Recipes."

Hacin + Associates was nominated for a Restaurant Design Award for Shore Leave in the South End.

The restaurant and chef award winners will be announced Sept. 25. For the complete list of nominees, go to [www.jamesbeard.org](http://www.jamesbeard.org).

Full disclosure: Devra First is a member of the James Beard Foundation's Restaurant and Chef Awards Committee.

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