



RESTAURANTS

Veggie Panna Cotta: So Weird It Works

Veggies may seem out of place in a panna cotta, but the custard serves as a blank canvas for pretty much any flavor—savory included.

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BY BELLE CUSHING AND CARLY FISHER



ALEX LAU

If you saw the [beet panna cotta with Meyer lemon mousse](#) recipe a reader requested in our most recent edition of [RSVP](#), you may have done a double-take. Beet panna cotta might sound strange, but it makes sense: Sweet vegetables lend themselves to desserts, and panna cotta can serve as a blank canvas for pretty much any flavor—savory included. Here are 6 veggie custards you can find across the country.

Beet

Susana Querejazu, the pastry chef at [Odd Duck](#) in Austin says: “Earthy, sweet beets are perfect in desserts. They go great with acid, cheese, sugar—it’s actually funny to me that they’re primarily thought of as savory, because they go so well with sugar. Try swapping the same weight of carrots in for beets—any sweet, starchy vegetable will work just as well.”

Sweet Corn

To intensify the corn flavor of his corn panna cotta at [The Hive](#) in Bentonville, AR, chef **Matt McClure** removes the kernels, steeps the cobs in cream, and then purées the kernels and cream. McClure serves his panna cotta with blueberries pickled in sugar, salt, red wine vinegar and fresh sage.

The broccoli panna cotta at Sinema in Nashville comes with bacon and dried tart cherries. Photo: MAZLA

Broccoli

“Like any custard, a savory panna cotta adds richness and delivers flavor in an elegant way,” says chef **Dale Levitski** of [Sinema](#) in Nashville, who likes to pair a vegetable riff, such as this one, with anything from shellfish to rabbit. Levitski has also experimented with panna cotta “dressings” set underneath salads at Sinema.

Sweet Potatoes

The sweet potato panna cotta with toasted pumpkin-spice marshmallows at [Press](#) in St. Helena, CA, is a lighter take on another classic veggie dessert: sweet potato pie.

Peas

At [Cypress Restaurant](#) in Charleston, SC, pastry chef **Andrea Upchurch** plays on the Indian flavors of curried pea panna cotta with tamarind-chile purée, yogurt-cilantro cream, and roasted garlic.

Parsnips

“Overwintered parsnips are a perfect sweet-starchy ingredient,” says **Justin Walker** of [Earth at Hidden Pond](#) in Kennebunkport, ME, who serves a parsnip panna cotta with pickled wild cranberries and earthy goat feta and black trumpets.

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