Indigenous Food Hubs
2026 Harvest of the Month

OCTOBER: HOMINY

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Hominy is corn transformed. Dried field corn is simmered with wood ash or slaked lime until the tough outer hull loosens and slips away, leaving a puffed, chewy kernel. The process is called nixtamalization, from the Nahuatl words for ashes and cooked corn.

It began in Mesoamerica thousands of years ago and traveled north along trade and kinship routes until nearly every corn-growing nation in North America had its own version.

WORDS AND WAYS

- Powhatan (Algonquian) — rokahaměn, prepared corn. The English word “hominy” likely comes from it.
- Nahuatl — nixtamalli, “ash corn.” The root of the word nixtamalization.
- Cherokee — kanona (ᏻᏃᎾ), the wooden tool used to break hominy corn.
- Hopi — nöqkwivi, hominy stew with meat and often served with chile.
- Diné (Navajo) — neeshjízhii, dried steamed corn. Steamed and sun-dried rather than treated with ash — a cousin to hominy, not the same process.

ACTIVITIES

- Put cornmeal, masa harina, and whole hominy side by side. Same plant — three different foods.
- Trace nixtamalization on a map, from Mesoamerica north to your community.
- Learn the word for corn in your own language and teach it to someone else.
- Ask a family member how they make their favorite corn dish and record it!

NUTRITION AND FUN FACTS

- Hominy counts as a starchy vegetable in school meals. ¼ cup of canned, drained hominy, or cooked whole hominy made from dried, credits as ¼ cup vegetable.
- Nixtamalization is the reason hominy is more nourishing than the corn it started as: the alkali releases niacin (vitamin B3) that is locked up in untreated corn, and slaked lime leaves calcium behind in the kernel.
- Whole hominy brings fiber, complex carbohydrates, and a little plant protein, with almost no fat.
- More tribal nations across North America have grown corn than any other single crop.
- The town of Hominy, Oklahoma, is one of the three districts of the Osage Nation.
- Corn soup at a Haudenosaunee longhouse gathering. Nöqkwivi at Second Mesa. Posole at a Pueblo feast day. Hominy grits and sofkee in the Southeast. Pozole across Mexico and the Southwest. The same technique, carried out in a hundred different kitchens, under a hundred different names.
- Whole hominy credits as a vegetable. At BIE schools, it can also count toward grains (½ cup = 1 oz eq).



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THREE SISTERS HOMINY STEW

TOTAL TIME
45 Minutes

SERVINGS
6 to 8

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 (15.5 oz) cans white or golden hominy, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15.5 oz) can pinto, drained and rinsed, or 1 ½ cups cooked tepary beans
- 3 cups diced winter squash or pumpkin (about 1 small squash), peeled and cut into ¾-inch cubes
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 (4 oz) can mild diced green chile, or 1 fresh roasted green chile, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: chopped cilantro, green onion, lime wedges, toasted pepitas

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook 4–5 minutes until softened.
2. Add the garlic and cook 1 more minute.
3. Add the squash, broth, oregano and cumin. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer 15 minutes, until the squash is just tender.
4. Stir in the hominy, beans and green chile. Simmer another 10–15 minutes so the flavors come together.
5. Taste and season with salt and pepper.
6. Serve hot, with cilantro, green onion, a squeeze of lime or toasted pepitas on top.



NOTES

- Hominy is already cooked when canned. It only needs warming and seasoning. Rinse it first to cut the canning liquid and lower the sodium. If you are starting from dried hominy or posole corn, soak overnight and simmer 2–3 hours until the kernels “flower,” then use 3 cups cooked in place of the two cans.
- This is a Three Sisters dish: corn, beans, and squash in one pot, the way they were traditionally grown in the fields to support each other.
- Make it a main dish. Add 1 pound of cooked ground turkey, bison, or shredded chicken.
- Leftovers get better on day two.

DIFFICULTY:

☑ EASY ☐ MEDIUM ☐ HARD

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