GARDEN & GUN

FOOD & DRINK

Southern-Style Two-Squash Casserole

Serves 4 to 6

Sometimes two squashes—zucchini and crookneck—are better than one

by KATHLEEN PURVIS

July 12, 2018

PHOTO: PHILLIP RHODES

Where to start with a bumper zucchini crop? With a Southern classic—squash casserole. Savannah, Georgia's Dora Charles, author of *A Real Southern Cook In Her Savannah Kitchen*, discovered that two squashes, zucchini and good ol' yellow crookneck, are definitely better than one.

Using both zucchini and yellow squash gives this version of the classic more color, texture, and flavor. If the yellow squash are large at the bottom, cut the necks into rounds, but cut the bulbous bottoms in half or quarters before you slice them, to

keep the sizes more uniform. Mixing crushed fried onions into the Ritz cracker topping is a genius move; it adds even more crunch and flavor.

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INGREDIENTS

2 pounds crookneck (yellow) squash, cut into 1/2-inch thick slices

1 pound zucchini, cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices

6 tablespoons butter, divided

1 large onion, diced

1 large green pepper, cored and diced

1 cup sour cream

1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Dora's Savannah Seasoning, about 1 tablespoon or to taste (see note)

1 cup crushed Ritz crackers

1/2 cup canned fried onions, crushed

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Put the squash and zucchini in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and simmer just a few minutes, until the squash is tender. Drain well and let it cool, then dry the squash between two towels or pap towels. (It's important to drain and pat the squash dry, so the casserole isn't too soupy.)

Melt 4 tablespoons butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and bell pepper and cook until soft, 6-7 minutes.

Scrape the onions and peppers into a large mixing bowl. Add the squashes, sour cream, cheese, and seasoning and stir to mix well. Spread in a 9-by-7-inch or 8-inch-square casserole dish.

Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons butter. In a small bowl, combine the cracker crumbs, fried onions, and butter and mix well. Sprinkle over the casserole and bal until golden brown and bubbling, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve hot or warm.

Dora's Savannah Seasoning: *1/3 cup Lawry's seasoned salt, 1/4 cup salt, 2 scant teaspoons garlic powder and 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper*. This will make more than you'll need, but it's a handy all-purpose seasoning to keep around.

From *A Real Southern Cook In Her Savannah Kitchen* by Dora Charles

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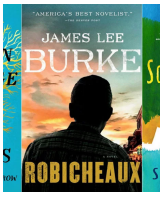

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