

Dora Charles's Squash Casserole

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Dora Charles served her squash casserole at our 19th Southern Foodways Symposium. Photo by Brandall Atkinson.

Southerners know that squash casserole—creamy, with a crunchy, cheesy topping—is a big thing. I usually make the topping from crushed Ritz crackers and canned fried onions, but for the symposium I only used crushed crackers. My recipe calls for only cheddar cheese, but for the symposium I doubled up with mozzarella and cheddar in equal amounts. Maybe that's why it was such a hit.

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds crookneck squash, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
1 pound zucchini, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
¾ stick (6 tablespoons) butter
1 large onion, chopped
1 large green bell pepper, chopped
½ large orange bell pepper, chopped
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
Dora's Savannah Seasoning, to taste
1 cup crushed crackers
½ cup fried onions, crushed

DORA'S SAVANNAH SEASONING

1/3 cup Lawry's seasoned salt
1/4 cup salt
2 scant tablespoons granulated garlic or garlic powder
1 tablespoon black pepper

In a small bowl, mix everything together thoroughly. Makes about 2/3 cup. Store seasoning in a tightly sealed glass jar. It will last for about three months.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put the squash slices in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook just until the squash is tender, a few minutes. Drain well and when it cools a little, squeeze the squash dry and set aside. Tip: Squash holds a lot of water, so squeeze it well to ensure the casserole isn't watery.

Melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and bell peppers and cook until soft, six to seven minutes.

Scrape the onion and peppers into a large bowl. Add the yellow squash, zucchini, sour cream, cheese, and seasoning. Put the squash mixture into a 9×7-inch or 8×8-inch casserole dish.

Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter. In a small bowl, combine the cracker crumbs and fried onions with the melted butter and mix well. Spread the cracker mixture over the casserole and bake until golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve hot or warm. Serves 4 to 6.

Dora Charles grew up in Savannah, Georgia, where she cooked alongside her grandmother since the age of seven. For twenty years, she led the kitchen of The Lady and Sons. Reprinted by permission from A Real Southern Cook in her Savannah Kitchen by Dora Charles (Rux Martin Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).