

Squash and Fontina Casserole

Adapted from chef Vivian Howard, co-owner of Chef & the Farmer restaurant in Kinston, and star of the “A Chef’s Life,” on PBS.

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoons cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons bacon fat
- 4 medium yellow onion halved and sliced thin, about 4 cups
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 8-10 medium yellow squash or zucchini, sliced 1/4 inch rounds or half moons
- 3 teaspoons finely chopped fresh sage or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried sage
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped rosemary
- 3 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 cups grated Fontina, Swiss or white American cheese
- 1 large egg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter an 8-inch-by-8-inch casserole dish and dust the inside of the dish with cornmeal. Alternately, you could use six (6-ounce) ramekins and make individual casseroles.

Heat bacon fat over medium heat in a 12-inch saute pan or cast iron skillet. Add onions and garlic and cook until onions are translucent. Add the squash, sage, rosemary, salt and black pepper. Stir it all to combine and cook over medium-high heat for about 25 minutes, checking periodically to make sure things aren’t sticking. You are looking for the squash to release all its liquid and begin to brown. Remove pan from the heat. While things are still steamy, stir in cheese. Allow the mixture to cool slightly. Then stir in the egg.

Fill whatever vessel you choose three-fourths of the way with the squash mixture. Bake uncovered for 30 to 45 minutes for the large casserole, or 15 to 20 minutes for the small ones. Either way you’re looking for it to brown on top and around the edges. Serve warm.

Yield: 10-12 servings.