

Zucchini Bake – by Heather Ostern

At the end of summer, the garden graces me with gargantuan zucchini. Instead of throwing grace away, I peel zucchini and cut it into cubes, placing 3 pounds in a freezer bag. By the time I finish, I have at least 4, gallon sized, freezer bags to put away. When the garden is gone and the world is buried in snow, I pull out a freezer bag and throw together a zucchini bake. My family is sunny and all smiles as they eat a casserole full of buttered breadcrumbs, Monterey jack cheese and green chiles.

Ingredients:

3 pounds of cubed zucchini
4 eggs
½ cup half and half
1 can of green chiles (4 ounce)
¼ cup chopped parsley
4 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper – optional
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 pounds ground bison
1 ½ cups of herb seasoned stuffing
Regular, soft butter

1. Peel zucchini and chop into ¼ inch cubes. Steam cubed zucchini. While the zucchini is steaming, brown ground bison in a frying pan and set aside. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Crack 4 eggs in a large bowl and whisk together. Add half and half, green chiles, chopped parsley, 3 and 2/3 cups of the Monterey Jack cheese, salt, pepper (if you choose) and baking powder. Whisk together.
3. Drain zucchini and add it to your large bowl. Finally, throw ground bison into the bowl. Mix all ingredients together thoroughly.
4. Coat casserole dish with regular butter. The butter should be soft enough to spread, but not melted. Set aside.
5. If your herbed seasoned stuffing is cubed, use a kitchen mallet to crush stuffing into smaller bits, so it looks like sand. Scatter ¾ cup of the breadcrumbs into bottom of buttered casserole dish.
6. Add zucchini-bison mixture into casserole dish. Take the last of the breadcrumbs and scatter over the casserole. Place small pats of butter on top of the breadcrumbs. Use no more than 1 ½ tablespoons of butter, just enough for the breadcrumbs to soak up and to brown nicely. Cover butter and breadcrumbs with remaining cheese.
7. Bake casserole, removing it from the oven when it is bubbling and slightly browned, about 45 to 50 minutes later, depending on your oven. Let casserole rest for about 5-10 minutes, giving it a chance to absorb the remaining juices! Enjoy!