

## Winning Recipes from the NC State Fair

It's that time of year again when the air starts to get cooler and the leaves begin to turn and the NC State Fair is just around the corner. One of the things I love about the fair is all the food and I'm not just talking about the foot long hotdogs and French fries. I'm talking about the Special Cooking Contests that are held every year in the Education Building. We have 12 this year: 6 featuring North Carolina commodities and 6 that are sponsored by National companies. If you think you can create an award winning recipe and want to win some cash, check out this year's contests at: [www.ncstatefair.org](http://www.ncstatefair.org)  
See you at the Fair!

### **Garden Fresh Veggie Gratin – Amanda Boury, Raleigh (3<sup>rd</sup> place)**

4 medium red skin potatoes  
½ each red, orange and purple pepper (or you can substitute yellow)  
1 medium zucchini  
1 cup shredded carrots  
½ sweet onion  
1 ½ cup shredded Fontina cheese or an Italian Cheese Blend  
¼ cup melted butter  
1 package of Hidden Valley Ranch Salad dressing and seasoning mix

Preheat oven to 400. Thinly slice all the vegetables in a bowl. Pour the melted butter over veggies and add the dry ranch dressing and mix well. Pour into a greased 13X9-baking dish. Bake covered for 30 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle cheese over veggies and broil until melted and brown.

PERSONAL Note: This smelled wonderful while it was baking and was so colorful. This is one of the easiest side dishes to make if you don't mind the chopping. You could really use any vegetables you have on hand. I used the Italian cheese blend because it was a better buy.

### **Apple Bacon Bites – Alice Spickard, Raleigh (3<sup>rd</sup> place)**

- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- ½ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 6 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 2 cups peeled and diced North Carolina apples
- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1 stick butter, melted

- 1 cup sour cream

Mix flour, brown sugar, curry powder, cheddar cheese and bacon together in a small bowl. Add diced apples and mix together. Set aside.

In another bowl, mix self-rising flour, melted butter and sour cream to make a batter. Combine the two mixtures gently and drop 1-2 teaspoons batter into un-greased mini muffin tins. Bake at 400 degrees for 12-15 minutes. Makes about 48 Apple Bacon Bites.

PERSONAL Note: The above recipe is how the recipe was judged and took home third place. I made it that way and then tweaked it a little because I like more of the filling and less breading. Here are my changes: Delete the 2 TBSP Flour. Increase the cheese to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups, 8 slices of bacon, 2- $\frac{1}{2}$  cups apple. Reduce the self-rising flour to 1- $\frac{1}{2}$  cups. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of sugar, salt and pepper.

### **Crispy Craisin Nut Crunch – Gail Fuller, Raleigh (1<sup>st</sup> place)**

- 1 eight-ounce package of white chocolate chips, melted
- 1 cup dried cranberries (Craisins)
- 1 cup pecans, toasted and chopped
- 1 cup Malt-o-Meal crispy rice cereal
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chocolate chips (any flavor), melted

Toast pecans in 350-degree oven for about five minutes. Melt chips in a bowl over boiling water. Add pecans, dried cranberries and crispy rice cereal to melted chips and stir until evenly coated. Drop by tablespoons onto wax paper. The mixture will not stick together very well until cooled. Cool about 15 minutes in refrigerator. Melt  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chocolate chips over boiling water and drizzle over each cluster. Makes about 24 clusters.

PERSONAL Note: This was very easy and great for the holidays. They will firm up and come together while they are cooling so mound them together on wax paper and let them sit. Then drizzle with the dark or milk chocolate.

### **Fall Veggie Stew – Sondra Bass, Dunn (1<sup>st</sup> place)**

- 2 large onions, chopped
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon garlic salt or powder
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups chopped cabbage

- ½ cup peanut butter
- 1- 40 ounce can of sweet potatoes, cut in 1-inch cubes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 can (14.5 ounce) diced tomatoes
- 1 can (14.5 ounce) okra, optional
- 1 can (15 ounce) black beans drained
- 1 cup apple juice
- 3 cups tomato juice

Sauté onions in vegetable oil until tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in cayenne pepper and garlic and sauté for two more minutes. Add chopped cabbage, sauté, covered, for three minutes. Mix in tomato and apple juices, salt, ginger and tomatoes. Add sweet potatoes, okra and black beans. Simmer for five minutes. Stir in peanut butter and simmer gently over very low heat until ready to serve. Stir frequently to prevent scorching. Add more juice or water if too thick. Serve with crackers. Serves 10-12 people.

PERSONAL Note: A very hearty Fall/Winter Stew and a great vegetarian meal. If you wanted to add meat to this meal, I would recommend chicken or pork.