

COMFORT CASSEROLE

1 large yam
1 large Bermuda onion
3-T. black raisins
1 small parsnip
Marinade:
3 tamarind pods-seeded
1-T. olive oil
1-T. maple syrup
1-t. Dijon mustard

3-T. water
juice 1/4 lemon
salt and pepper- to taste

What's Tamarind?

Originally from Spain and Portugal, tamarind is a spice derived from a pod that grows on trees. When they ripen, the pods are sticky and gooey, but deliciously edible right from the tree. The taste is unique and spicy, but not hot. If you are able to find the whole pods in an ethnic market, be sure all the seeds have been removed before using them.



Peel the onion and cut into wedges (like a lemon) about 1" thick. Do not peel, but just cut the yam into wedge shaped pieces approximately the same size. Place the onion and yam wedges with the raisins into a baking dish that is small enough to create a layer a minimum of 4" deep. A standard loaf pan is about the right size. Using glass or ceramic with a lid is best.

Place all marinade ingredients in a blender and blend for several minutes until smooth. It will take a minute for the tamarind pod to break up sufficiently. Add additional water if the mixture is too thick to blend into a smooth liquid the consistency of brown gravy. Toss the marinade and salt and pepper into the vegetables and coat evenly. Bake with a lid on for 45 minutes at 375°.

Cut the parsnip into splinters approximately 3" long. After 45 minutes, add the parsnip, turn the mixture and continue to bake for an additional 15-20 minutes without the lid.

Why wedges not slices?

If you cut something in a wedge, the skinny part of it will cook faster than the thick part, creating a variation in texture. A little extra brown crispness along with a softer texture is often a good thing, especially with potatoes, onions, yams, eggplant and more.