



Sugar Apple

Posts From The Caribbean

Tomato Choka

Abigail here. So, my sister got to go to the Attack of the Killer Tomato Festival and all I got was a lousy t-shirt. Actually, it's a great t-shirt. If I couldn't be there, I'm happy that Amy and Ted got to enjoy my favorite fruit in all its Southern glory. And I also got this fantastic post...thanks Amy!

Here's an update on one of my favorite tomato dishes, tomato choka. This is a Devica recipe so it's seriously hot. Feel free to use less hot pepper or to substitute a pepper with less heat, such as a jalapeño. The first time I posted this recipe I was using summer tomatoes that were so ripe and juicy that my choka was wetter than normal. Devica now tells me she uses exclusively Italian-style plum tomatoes, which are full of flavor but much less juicy.

Choka is a specialty of Trinidad, where it's often served for breakfast with soft, white sada roti. It's a superb relish to serve alongside grilled fish, chicken or meat. And a cheddar and choka sandwich is one of my favorite lunches. No matter how you serve it, you'll want to give your guests a heads up that it's hot stuff.

4-5 firm but ripe plum tomatoes
3 cloves of garlic, peeled
1-2 scotch bonnet peppers
1-2 tablespoons of cooking oil
1/2 of a small onion, finely chopped

Put the tomatoes, garlic and peppers on a large piece of aluminum foil and bring the foil up to make a tightly sealed package. Put the foil package on a barbecue grill or directly on the burner of a gas stove. You can also cook it under the broiler but you won't get that slightly smoky flavor that a bit of flame imparts and that I think makes the choka so tasty.

Cook the package, turning occasionally so that all sides get a go on the heat, for about 15 minutes. You want the vegetables to soften considerably so they'll be easy to mash.

When the vegetables are soft, peel the skin off the tomato and the pepper and put into a bowl with the garlic. I like to leave in a little of the skin because I like the flavor and

texture it imparts. Use a potato masher, a fork or a pestle to mash it all up together (Devica uses the end of her wooden rolling pin) and stir it up so the garlic and pepper are evenly distributed throughout.

Add the onion to the bowl, but don't stir it in, just sprinkle it on top of the tomato mixture. Heat a little cooking oil in a small pot or a metal ladle over high heat until it's smoking hot. Pour the hot oil into the bowl over the onion. The oil will sizzle when it hits the choka and cook the very onion slightly. (If you don't like the taste of uncooked onion, you can give it a quick fry in the oil in the pan before adding it to the choka.) Add salt to taste and serve.

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from the article *Attack of the Killer Tomato Festival* posted on September 3, 2010