

Cheese and Tots Casserole

Ingredients

- 32 oz bag (or thereabouts) of tater tots
- Optional: 1 onion (thinly sliced, or chopped)
- 1 heaping tsp of minced garlic (or 2 cloves finely chopped)
- 1 lb ground beef, turkey, or alternative
- 15 oz can of corn (drained)
- 4 oz can of mild green chilis (not drained, note that the cheaper brands often have stems in them)
- Optional: 2¼ oz can of sliced black olives (drained)
- 1 C of cheddar cheese (or more)
- 15 oz can of condensed cream of mushroom soup
- ⅓ C of milk (any kind)
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp harissa or chili powder

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425° F (220° C) and bake the tots for ~20 minutes while you move on to the next step.
2. Prepare a casserole dish with cooking spray or oil.
3. If you go for the onions, you can either dice them up or use a mandolin. Some people prefer to add the onions later. But if you choose to slice them thin, then I suggest this: put about 1T of oil in a pan on medium heat, add 1/2 tsp sugar to the onions, and when the oil shimmers, brown the onions.
4. You can add the garlic to the pan (especially if the garlic is minced) or wait until you add the other spices.
5. Brown the ground meat in the browned onions.
6. Somewhere in here the tots will be done. Remove them and reduce the heat of the oven to 375° F (or 190° C).
7. Add the corn, undrained chiles, and drained olives (optional), in that order. (This is the place where some people prefer to add the onions, rather than browning them.) Mix well and heat through.
8. Add about half of the cheese and stir until it starts to melt.

9. Stir in the soup, milk, and spices (in that order).
10. Pour all of that into the casserole dish.
11. Cover that with the tots.
12. Cover that with the rest of the cheese.
13. Put it in the oven for 30 minutes or so, until the top looks good.
14. Serve it after it rests for 5 minutes.

If you've made a crust of browned cheese, you've done it right. Serve with a ladle. This reheats well, if/when you have any left over.