

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Rome, Ga. homemaker wins first Southeastern Food Processors Association Recipe Contest**

### **Low-country spicy, veggie macaroni and cheese bake judged best of more than 1,000 entries**

(Charleston, S.C.) – The winning recipe highlighting the South’s Best Foods was announced today during the Southeastern Food Processors Association’s (SFPA) annual convention. Mary Louise Lever’s Low-Country Spicy, Veggie Macaroni And Cheese Bake proved to judges that this Southern comfort was the best of more than 1,000 entries in the organization’s inaugural recipe contest.

“I took one of my favorite recipes and added some Texas Pete® Hot Sauce and Margaret Holmes® Tomatoes, Okra and Corn and created a masterpiece of Southern comfort food,” explained Mary Louise Lever of Rome, Ga. “I’m overjoyed that the SFPA will be sharing my recipe with millions of other folks who are looking to make an ordinary dish something special.”

The SFPA sponsored the recipe contest as part of the organization’s first ‘Buy The South’s Best Foods’ promotion earlier this year. “The association represents so many household brand names and we wanted to raise consumer awareness that these brands are Southern-based companies,” said SFPA President Tom Densmore, who announced the \$500 winning recipe at the group’s annual convention underway in Charleston, S.C.

Lever is also among 100 finalists in a national recipe contest with a \$1 million grand prize. “They call me the ‘food lady’ here in Rome and I’m happy to have the title,” Lever said.

The SFPA’s origin dates to 1942. Its mission is for the sharing of ideas and new technologies within the food industry. The association’s ‘Buy The South’s Best Foods’ promotion will be celebrated again in May 2010 across seven Southeastern states. The promotion includes more than 11 million newspaper inserts for several weeks during the month. The newspaper inserts will offer consumers discount coupons for SFPA member products and consumers the opportunity to create new recipes that represent the Southern tradition of great tasting food. For more information on ‘Buy The South’s Best Foods’ visit [www.buythesouthsbestfoods.com](http://www.buythesouthsbestfoods.com)

(Editor’s Note: The winning recipe for this year’s contest is provided below. A photo of the recipe is available by contacting Karen Jenkins at [kjenkins@cenergy.com](mailto:kjenkins@cenergy.com) or by phone at (423) 926-9494, ext. 111)

## **Low-Country Spicy, Veggie Macaroni And Cheese Bake**

**By Mary Louise Lever, Rome, Ga.**

- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 3 tablespoons plain flour
- 1 teaspoon of salt free garlic and herb seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Texas Pete<sup>®</sup> Hot Sauce
- 2 cups, milk
- 1 15 oz. can Margaret Holmes<sup>®</sup> Tomatoes, Okra and Corn
- 8 ounces elbow macaroni, cooked by package directions, drained
- 16 ounces grated sharp cheddar cheese, divided usage
- 1 cup cornbread crumbs or bread crumbs

Heat oven to 350F. In large non-stick saucepan over medium heat, add butter and flour whisking together and cooking until flour is light brown. Add seasoning, hot sauce and

milk, whisking and cooking about 10 minutes for mixture to thicken slightly. Stir in Tomatoes, Okra and Corn mixture (drained), macaroni and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of cheese, heating well.

Pour into non-stick sprayed 2-quart casserole dish. Combine cornbread crumbs and remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  of cheese and sprinkle over all.

Bake 30-40 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before serving. Makes 6-8 servings.



Caption: The Southeastern Food Processors Association's 'Buy The South's Best Foods Recipe Contest' Winning Recipe: Low-Country Spicy, Veggie Macaroni And Cheese Bake. Created by Mary Louise Lever of Rome, Ga.



Caption: Mary Louise Lever, Southeastern Food Processor's Association 2009 'Buy The South's Best Foods Recipe Contest' winner is from Rome, Ga.