“Zucchini is Italian” say many who relish the lovely green summer squash found growing throughout the United States. “Zucchini is as American as the Fourth of July” say other zucchini lovers. Both are correct! Zucchini is one of many varieties of summer squash that originated on the American continent.

Archaeological findings document that Native Americans of the Western Hemisphere cultivated the squash as one of their staple foods perhaps as far back as 2,000 years B.C. In fact, the very name “squash” comes from a Native American word.

Native Americans steamed, baked or fried the colorful and tasty vegetable. They prepared squash in casserole type dishes, mixing in honey, maple syrup, nuts, berries or herbs, rice, meat or other vegetables. Settlers in the new world borrowed the Native American’s recipes and continued squash cultivation. However, by the early 20th century, squash had become mostly a rural dish. Millions of city dwellers had never even heard of it. Although squash never disappeared from the American diet, it was pushed aside by fast foods and a decline in home cooking.

Europeans also liked zucchini. The explorers of the new world brought back many plants and seeds to Europe for cultivation during the 14th and 15th centuries. For the next 300 to 400 years squash grew steadily in popularity on the European continent and became an important food source, especially in Italy and in other countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

World War II and Americans traveling to Europe after the war, reintroduced zucchini to the U.S. Americans were fascinated by the beautiful squash they saw in farm markets and captivated by the brilliant orange zucchini blossoms they saw bursting open in skillets of hot butter in Italian restaurants. Thus zucchini came home to American gardens, kitchens and restaurants.
**Growing Zucchini:**

Plant zucchini from seed, or plant seedlings after May 15, the last frost date in NJ. Zucchini plants are large and may take up substantial space in the garden. Zucchini will mature and be ready for eating in about 50 days. Zucchini plants are very productive even when growing conditions are marginal. When heat and moisture are ideal, growth is so rapid that you may need to pick daily.

**Selection:**

Zucchini is a tender, summer squash that includes yellow or crookneck squash, patty pan or scallop, round and baby varieties. Zucchini is widely available during the summer in supermarkets and farm markets in NJ. Look for solid, firm squash; not spongy or pitted.

Zucchini squash may have dark green skin and greenish-white flesh or a golden skin and yellow-gold flesh. Both types are long and slender with slight ridges. Seeds are edible, unless large. You may wish to remove large seeds.

Zucchini is edible at any size. Its use will determine the best size. Zucchini from 6 to 9 inches are good for any type of preparation, from raw snacks to soup to soufflé. Large zucchini are tougher, seedier, and less flavorful, so they are best in stuffed or grated recipes.

**Nutrition:** 1 cup sliced raw zucchini, with skin: (Source - USDA Nutrient Database)

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**Storage:**

Zucchini and other summer squash do not store long. Store squash a couple of days in the refrigerator. If held 4 days or more, chilling injury (water soaked spots) may occur.

Zucchini is easy to freeze, but the thawed frozen product will be watery.

Canning is not recommended.
HOW TO PREPARE ZUCCHINI

How much?
One pound of zucchini (three medium about 7 inches long) equals 3 cups sliced or 2 ½ cups chopped.

What about the seeds and skin?
There is no need to pare or remove seeds if the squash is small or medium in size. Remove seeds if large. Skin may be tough on larger squash, so peeling is an option.

Preparation ideas:

- **Steam or blanch** whole, cut in half, diced, sliced or cubed.
- **Simmer** whole, cut in half lengthwise, diced, sliced, or cubed in boiling water.
- **Sauté** in small amount of butter or oil diced, sliced, cubed, grated or halved.
- **Microwave**
- **Grill**
- **Bake**
  - Halve lengthwise; scoop out pulp and fill with stuffing mixture. Bake 25-30 min at 350°F
  - Thinly slice, place on baking dish with other ingredients and bake at 350°F until tender

**Spiralize** into long, thin strands with a spiralizer tool. *

Use them raw or sauté in a little olive oil and top with your favorite sauce or a little grated cheese.

* handheld, freestanding & stand mixer versions are sold wherever kitchen tools are available.

- **Deep fry.** Heat oil between 350° to 375°F. Cut squash into strips or rounds; dredge in flour and fry until golden. **HEALTH TIP:** Eat small portions and only once in a while! This is a high fat, high calorie dish.
• **Steam, blanch or simmer** whole until almost tender. Slice in half lengthwise and scoop out pulp. Combine with cooked ingredients for filling. Bake in a little water for 10 minutes at 375°F.

• **Stir fry.** Heat oil in wok and stir strips or slices 2—3 minutes

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**HOW TO FREEZE ZUCCHINI**

**SLICE AND FREEZE:**

1. Use young squash with small seeds and tender rind
2. Wash, cut in 1/2 inch slices
3. Blanch in boiling water for 3 minutes
4. Cool immediately in cold water for 3 minutes
5. Drain
6. Pack into freezer container or a bag, leaving 1/2 inch head space
7. Label, seal and freeze

**GRATE AND FREEZE FOR BAKING:**

1. Choose young tender zucchini
2. Wash and grate
3. Steam blanch in small quantities for 1 to 2 minutes until translucent
4. Rinse under cold water until fully cool
5. Drain well
6. Pack in measured amounts into containers, leaving ½ inch headspace
7. Label, seal and freeze

**HOW LONG DOES IT KEEP IN THE FREEZER?**

1. Freeze up to 1 year at 0 °F.
2. Thawed zucchini will be watery.
3. Drain or squeeze out excess water prior to use.
**MICROWAVE ZUCCHINI DIP**

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 1 medium zucchini (1 1/2 cups shredded zucchini)
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- Dash of cayenne
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red pepper
- 3/4 cup light dairy sour cream
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Remove excess moisture by pressing shredded zucchini between layers of paper towels.
2. Combine onion, red pepper and butter in 1 quart casserole.
3. Microwave 1 to 3 minutes at High or until onion is tender.
4. Stir in all remaining ingredients and chill at least 2 hours.

**ZUCCHINI APPETIZER**

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 3 cups thinly sliced, unpeeled zucchini
- 1 cup reduced fat buttermilk baking mix
- 1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoon fresh parsley
- OR 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1 dash pepper
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 4 eggs or egg substitute
- 2 tablespoons 1% milk

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Pre-heat oven to 350 ° F.
2. Oil oblong pan, 13 x 9 inches.
3. Mix all ingredients.
4. Spread in pan and bake until brown, about 30 minutes.
5. Cut into pieces about 2 x 1 inches
ASIAN STYLE ZUCCHINI SALAD

DIRECTIONS:

3 medium zucchini
2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
2 tablespoons vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon sesame oil

INGREDIENTS:

1. Slice zucchini into thin discs or ribbons or spiralize
2. Mix soy sauce, vinegar, and oil. Pour over zucchini slices.
3. Chill in refrigerator for at least one hour.

CHILLED ZUCCHINI SOUP

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons butter
1/3 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup flour
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1 can low sodium chicken broth
2 cups chopped zucchini
2 cups 1% milk

DIRECTIONS:

1. Sauté onions in butter, blend in flour & nutmeg.
2. Stir in chicken broth & bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Remove heat & cool.
3. Pour liquid into blender container and add zucchini.
4. Puree in blender
5. Pour in milk and blend again.
6. Chill 3 hours or overnight.
ZUCCHINI SOUFFLE

INGREDIENTS:
- 2 cups shredded zucchini
- 6 eggs or egg substitute
- 1/2 cup 1% milk
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
- 12 ounces reduced fat cream cheese, cubed
- 3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese

DIRECTIONS:
1. Preheat oven to 375 °F.
2. Grease a 2 quart soufflé dish.
3. Combine zucchini in towel and twist to wring out excess moisture.
4. Combine eggs, cream, onion, pepper and mustard in blender. Cover and blend until smooth.
5. Gradually add cream cheese and cheddar cheese. In small amounts & blend on high speed until smooth.
6. Layer cheese mixture and zucchini into greased 2 quart soufflé dish.
7. Stir gently to mix.
8. Bake for 50 minutes, or until center is set.

ZUCCHINI MUSHROOM QUICHE

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 unbaked pie shell
- 4 cups shredded zucchini
- 1/2 cups shredded Swiss cheese
- 1 4-oz can mushroom pieces, drained
- 4 eggs or substitute
- 1 13-oz can evaporated milk
- Parsley flakes
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 slices bacon, crisply fried, drained & crumbled, optional

DIRECTIONS:
1. Preheat oven to 325°F
2. Layer zucchini, cheese, mushroom pieces & bacon crumbs on bottom of pie shell.
3. Beat together eggs, milk, worcestershire sauce and pour into pie shell. Sprinkle top with parsley.
4. Bake for 30-40 minutes, until knife inserted in quiche comes out clean.
**ZUCCHINI COINS**

**INGREDIENTS:**
- Zucchini
- Spray Butter, optional
- Spice and/or pepper—Try Old Bay, Italian spice mix, or Cajun spice mix
- Grated cheese

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Decide on cooking method – microwave oven or regular oven.
2. Select appropriate cookware – a microwave safe plate or baking tray covered with foil.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F, if using.
4. Slice zucchini into rounds about ½-inch thick. Arrange slices on cookware.
5. Lightly spray slices with butter, if desired.
6. Sprinkle lightly with spices &/or pepper.
7. Top with a small amount of grated cheese.

**COOK:**
- **Microwave method:** Cook on High for 5 or more minutes until zucchini is soft, but not mushy (check with a fork) and cheese has melted.
- **Oven method:** Bake for 10 or more minutes, until zucchini is soft & cheese browns.

**BAKED STUFFED ZUCCHINI**

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 2 medium zucchini, about 1 pound
- 1 tablespoon butter or oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
- 2 cups soft bread cubes
- 1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- Pepper

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. Wash zucchini.
3. Cook whole zucchini in boiling water for about 8 minutes.
4. Drain and cut into halves lengthwise.
5. Scoop out pulp and chop.
6. Melt butter in skillet, sauté garlic and onion for 1 minute, or until onion is tender.
7. Stir in zucchini pulp, bread cubes, poultry seasoning, and pepper.
8. Stuff zucchini halves with bread mixture.
9. Place in a greased baking dish.
10. Bake 20 minutes or until tender. Serves 4
DIRECTIONS:

1. Dissolve yeast in 1/2 cup warm water.
2. In separate bowl, combine flour, spices, salt.
3. In saucepan heat milk, brown sugar and butter, stirring constantly until milk is scalded and butter starts to melt. Cool until lukewarm.
4. Add dry ingredients to dissolved yeast, then stir in milk mixture, then zucchini.
5. Beat well until batter is smooth.
7. If batter is not stiff enough to turn out onto kneading surface, add more flour (1/2 cup) until it becomes moderately stiff.
8. Turn onto lightly floured surface and knead 5 to 8 minutes, until smooth & elastic.
9. Place in greased bowl, cover and let rise until double. Punch down.
10. Shape into loaves, place in greased bread pans.
11. Allow to rise again until double.
12. Preheat oven to 375 °F.
13. Bake for 35—40 minutes or until bread sounds hollow when tapped.
14. Remove from pan and cool on rack.

INGREDIENTS:

2 packages active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour *
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup milk
1/4 cup brown sugar
3/4 cup zucchini, grated
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup raisins

* Or substitute 1 cup whole wheat and 2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
ZUCCHINI YEAST ROLLS

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 teaspoon flour
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 1 package yeast
- 1 cup warm water or milk

DIRECTIONS:

1. Stir together 1 teaspoon flour, 2 teaspoons honey, 1 package yeast and 1/2 cup of warm water.
2. Add all at once to remaining ingredients in a large bowl.
3. Knead dough about 10 minutes to make a soft firm dough.
4. Grease surface of dough and let rise in a warm place until doubled.
5. Turn out on floured board and knead lightly.
6. Shape into rolls & place on pan.  Let rise again about 30 minutes.
7. Preheat oven to 400°F.
8. Optional - moisten tops with water & sprinkle with poppy or sesame seeds.
9. Place rolls in pan on middle rack and immediately lower heat to 375°F.
10. Bake 15—20 minutes.

CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 1/2 cups sifted flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt

- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs or egg substitute
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 3 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup Zucchini, grated, squeezed and tightly packed

- 2 teaspoons grated orange peel
- 2 cups coarsely grated zucchini
- 1/2 cup 1 % milk
- 1 cup chopped walnuts, optional

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Grease and flour a 10 inch tube pan or use three 9 x 3 inch loaf pans.
3. Combine flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon.  Set aside.
4. Beat butter and sugar together.
5. Add eggs, beat.
6. Stir in vanilla, orange peel and zucchini
7. Add dry ingredients, milk and nuts.
8. Pour into prepared pan.
9. Bake 45 minutes (test before removing).
10. Cool 10 minutes in pan, then remove and cool on rack.
ZUCCHINI CIDER CAKE

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 cups zucchini, grated 1/2 cup buttermilk 1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 cup apple cider 3 eggs, beaten, or egg substitute 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup honey 2 1/2 cups self-rising flour 1/2 teaspoon allspice
1 cup dark brown sugar 1/2 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional)
1/2 cup butter 1 teaspoon baking soda

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat over 350 °F. Grease a large loaf pan.
2. Stir zucchini and cider together.
3. In separate bowl beat honey, sugar and butter.
5. Mix dry ingredients and add to zucchini mixture.
6. Stir zucchini mixture into buttermilk mixture.
7. Stir in nuts.
8. Pour into large loaf pan and bake for 35-40 minutes. Test.
9. Cool 10 minutes in pan. Then remove and cool on rack.

PINEAPPLE ZUCCHINI CAKE

INGREDIENTS:

3 eggs 1 8-oz can pineapple, drained 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 cup oil 3 cups unsifted flour 3/4 teaspoon nutmeg
2 cups sugar 2 teaspoons baking soda 1 cup raisins
2 teaspoons vanilla 1 teaspoon salt 1 cup chopped nuts, optional
2 cups grated zucchini 1/2 teaspoon baking powder

DIRECTIONS:

1. Grease and flour two 9 x 5 loaf pans.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F.
4. Add oil, sugar and vanilla and beat until thick and foamy.
5. Stir in zucchini and pineapple.
6. Combine remaining ingredients; stir gently into zucchini mixture.
7. Pour into prepared pans.
8. Bake for 1 hour or until cake tests done.
**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Preheat oven 350 °F.
2. Blend butter and sugar.
4. Sift together dry ingredients.
5. Gradually blend dry ingredients into egg mixture.
7. Fold in raisins and nuts.
8. Drop cookies on ungreased baking sheet.
9. Bake for 10-12 minutes until lightly browned.

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 3/4 cup butter
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger

**ZUCCHINI DATE SQUARES**

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 2/3 cup zucchini, grated
- 1/2 cup chopped dates
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts
- 1 cup flour (plus 2 teaspoons)
- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Grease a 9 inch square baking pan.
2. Preheat oven 350°F.
3. Mix dates, nuts and the 2 teaspoons of flour and set aside.
4. Melt butter and stir in brown sugar, zucchini and vanilla.
5. Beat in eggs.
6. Sift in remaining flour, spices and salt, soda and baking powder.
7. Mix well.
8. Stir in floured dates and nuts.
9. Pour into prepared pan and bake for 20-25 minutes.
**ZUCCHINI CUSTARD PIE**  (MARY SORIANO, FCHS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER)

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pastry pie shell
- 2 cups peeled, cubed zucchini
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 eggs, beaten (or egg substitute)
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1—12 ounce can non-fat evaporated milk

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Preheat oven 350 °F.
2. Cook zucchini until soft. Drain well in colander.
4. Blend starting on low and increasing speed until well blended & zucchini is pureed.
5. Pour into the unbaked pie shell.
6. Bake for 45 minutes or until knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

**ZUCCHINI BREAD**  (ALICE HENNEMAN, M.S., R.D. UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA EXTENSION)

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup vegetable-oil
- 2 cups grated zucchini
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/2 cup raisins (optional)
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts (optional)

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Lightly grease and flour a 9 x 5 loaf pan. Preheat oven to 325°F.
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs lightly. Add sugar, oil, zucchini, & vanilla. Beat.
3. In a separate bowl, measure dry ingredients and stir to combine. Add nuts and raisins, if desired.
4. Add dry ingredients to the egg mixture. Stir just until all ingredients are moistened.
5. Spoon into loaf pan.
6. Bake for 50 minutes. Test for doneness by inserting a toothpick in the center. It should come out dry.
7. Allow loaf to cool 5 to 10 minutes before turning out onto a cooling rack. Serve warm or cool.

**Note:** You may use whole wheat pastry flour for all of the flour. Whole wheat pastry flour adds fiber, but gives a light, tender product. Do not use for yeast breads. Whole wheat pastry flour keeps best in the refrigerator or freezer. For best quality, use within 6 months if stored in the refrigerator or 1 year if stored in the freezer. 

**Adapted from:** Favorite Recipes for Family Meals, Washington State University Extension at [http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov](http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov)
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