

Zucchini & Summer Squash

Although it is treated as a vegetable in a culinary context, botanically, summer squash are actually fruits. They are prolific plants, and are commonly referred to as summer squash because, unlike winter squash, they are harvested and consumed before their skins harden.

Like all squash, summer squash originated in the Americas thousands of years ago. In fact, the name squash derives from the word *askutasquash*, a word from the Narragansett language meaning “a green thing eaten raw”.

The zucchini we know today was developed in Northern Italy in the late 19th century, and it is believed that Italian immigrants brought this new squash variety with them to the United States in the 1920s.

CULINARY TIPS

- Zucchini can be eaten raw, steamed, fried, sautéed, or grilled. They are terrific “spiralized” and used in place of pasta.
- The blossoms are edible and are quite a delicacy. They are most often stuffed, dipped in a light batter, and fried.
- Zucchini are wonderful in baked goods. It’s best to squeeze as much water as possible out of it before adding it to the batter.

HOW TO STORE ZUCCHINI

Zucchini will keep for a week or so. Store it unwashed in a loose plastic bag in the crisper drawer.

3 WAYS TO PREPARE ZUCCHINI

- Grill it! So simple and yummy. Brush slices of zucchini with a bit of oil, then grill for 2-3 minutes per side. Serve as is or dress it up with lemon and herbs, top it with romesco sauce, or drizzle it with a bit of balsamic vinegar.
- Spiralize it! Lightly sauté your zucchini noodles then toss them with pesto, simmer them in a curry or broth, or eat them raw in a salad.
- Make fritters! Mix grated zucchini with eggs, a bit of flour, and seasoning of your choice. Spoon into a hot, oiled pan to make small fritters, fry them for 2–3 minutes on each side, and serve them with a yogurt and dill sauce.

ZUCCHINI AND SUMMER SQUASH WITH CRISPY CORNMEAL COATING

INGREDIENTS

1 cup organic cornmeal
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
2 small summer squash sliced into 1/4" rounds
2 small zucchini squash sliced into 1/4" rounds
1 cup all purpose flour
1 egg beaten
high temperature oil (such as canola) for frying

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix the cornmeal with salt, pepper, and any herbs or spices (if using) in a shallow bowl. Put flour in a different shallow bowl and the beaten egg in another.

Working with one slice of squash at a time, coat lightly with flour, shaking off excess. Next, dip floured pieces into egg, letting excess drip off, then dip in cornmeal mix and coat well. Set each piece aside until all are ready for frying.

Pour enough oil into a shallow frying pan to thoroughly coat the bottom of the pan. Heat over medium-high heat.

Line a baking sheet with a paper towel.

Transfer a few pieces of coated slices to the hot pan and adjust heat to avoid over-browning. Cook until golden brown on each side (about 3–4 minutes per side). Transfer cooked slices to the paper towel lined tray. Repeat the above steps until all slices are cooked. (Slices can be kept warm in a 275°F oven.) Add more oil if necessary and scrape out any cornmeal from the skillet as you are cooking so it doesn't burn.

Once cooked, season with additional salt and enjoy!