Zucchini and Summer Squash

Summer Feasting

Zucchini and summer squash display such rapid middle of summer growth that some gardeners sneak out at night and gift their surplus on local doorsteps. If you discovered a mountain of summer squash in your garden or on your doorstep, steaming, sautéing, baking, grating raw in salads, slicing and dipping, dehydrating, and making noodle shapes for sauce are some of the many ways squash can be devoured.



Unlike the sweet fruits of summer, zucchini and summer squash are actually non-sweet fruits that tend to be easy to digest and very balancing to the body. So feel free to indulge and find new ways to eat these tender fruits. You'll reap the health benefits these squash offer.

Recent studies have shown, zucchini and other summer squash rank in the top three foods high in antioxidant rich carotenoids like alpha-carotene, zeaxanthin, and lutein. Summer squash are also high in potassium, vitamin C, manganese, and vision preserving vitamin A, as well as B-1 and B-6. These nutrients support bone health including the health of the teeth, heart health, healthy weight, cancer prevention, collagen production (think beautiful skin) and eye health. Beyond eating them raw, steaming them with the skin intact (as opposed to boiling or microwaving), has been shown to be the best way to preserve those nutrients.

Summer squashes are members of the Cucurbitaceae family and are relatives of both the melon and the cucumber. All parts of

summer squash are edible, including the flesh, seeds, and skin. For Native Americans, squashes were so prized they were coined as one of the “Three Sisters” along with corn (maize) and beans.

Zucchini can have a yellow skin, green skin, or striped and speckled skin. Black Beauty, Golden, Caserta, Cocozelle, Round, and Dark Green are some of the popular varieties and as one more bonus, zucchini is one of the summer squash types that produces edible flowers.

Golden Summer Crookneck and Early Prolific Straightneck are the varieties many of us refer to as summer squash and they are most often yellow in color – although they can also be pale green.

Scallop Squash, also called Patty Pan, can be white, pale yellow, or light green in color and are the shape of a thick sand dollar or saucer. Scallop Squash often have a sweeter flesh than other summer squash.

The trick to harvesting fresh zucchini and summer squash all summer is to plant in succession in late spring, sowing a few seeds every two weeks. This way if your neighbor doesn’t leave you a basket of these beauties, you’ll still be enjoying squash in salads or warmed up with fresh garden tomatoes, basil, and onions. Instead of high carb noodles, make spirals or ribbons with your squash and then indulge in pasta sauces over nutrient rich, hydrating (95% water), low-calorie summer squash.

Feeling adventurous? Find novel ways to make zucchini bread and zucchini chips. Your search engine will lead you to many recipes, both raw and cooked, that you will be proud to present at parties or for just you and your clan.