



Summer Squash

Squash are gourds – fleshy vegetables protected by a rind. Melons and cucumbers are in the same family. Some squash grow on bushes and some on vines. They are divided into two main groups, summer squash and winter squash.



Photo courtesy of *The Cook's Thesaurus* website

Summer squash have soft shells and tender, light-colored flesh and are picked while immature. Winter squash have hard shells, darker, tougher flesh and seeds and are not harvested until they are mature.

Summer squash are more than 95 percent water and offer only a small amount of nutrients. The good news, since they are high in water, they are low in calories, about 19 per cup of raw sliced squash. Summer squash have good amounts of vitamin C, more in raw than cooked, fiber, potassium and magnesium.

Types of Squash

The most popular summer squash is the familiar green zucchini. It is only one of several common types of summer squash, which vary mainly in shape and color. All are similar enough in flavor and texture to be interchangeable in recipes. See the word-find for names of common summer squash.

Choosing Squash

Summer squash taste best when small to medium size, not more than seven inches long. Choose squash that are firm and fairly heavy for their size. Look for squash with sound, glossy skin, avoid those showing nicks, pits, bruises or soft spots. It should be plump with the stem end fresh and green. Summer squash should be refrigerated.

Preparing

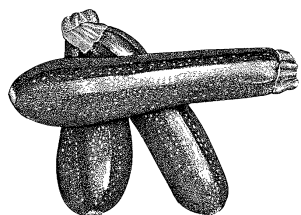
Wash well and trim the ends. Summer squash need not be peeled or seeded unless it is oversized and has a thick skin or large seeds.

- Cut summer squash into ½ inch thick lengthwise slabs. Brush with vegetable oil and grill.
- Put cubes of any summer squash into soups at the last minute. Cook until just heated through.
- Make a summer squash slaw: Shred zucchini or yellow squash, unpeeled. Toss with a little lemon juice or vinegar and set aside. Make a dressing of low-fat yogurt, black pepper, and minced dill. Drain the squash and toss with dressing. Serve at room temperature.

Remember Farmers' Markets are a good source of fresh summer squash.

Zucchini Pancakes

- 3 medium zucchini
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 green onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons oil



Shred zucchini, sprinkle with salt and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes to draw off moisture. Squeeze or wring the shredded zucchini in a clean kitchen towel to remove all the moisture you can. Combine the squeezed-out zucchini with the rest of the ingredients except the oil, mixing well. Heat the oil in heavy skillet. Spoon the zucchini mixture into the heated skillet, shaping into pancakes. Cook over medium heat until set and light brown. Flip pancakes and finish cooking the other side.

Serve whole or cut into wedges. Sour cream or plain yogurt makes a nice accompaniment.



Zucchini with Walnuts

- 2 cups zucchini, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons diced green onion
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1-2 tablespoons vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted

In a large saucepan, combine zucchini, green onions and margarine. Cook over low heat for 5 minutes. Stir in vinegar and salt, cover and cook over low heat 3 to 5 minutes more until zucchini is tender. Stir in walnuts and serve. Serves 2 to 3.

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BABY ACORN
 CHAYOTE
 CROOKNECK
 GLOBE SQUASH
 GOLDEN ZUCCHINI

PATTYPAN
 SCALLOPINI
 STRAIGHTNECK
 ZUCCHINI