

# FOOD \$ENSE



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## Zucchini

### Food \$ense Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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**Utah Local Fresh Season:** Zucchini is considered a summer squash and therefore comes into flowering in the summer months 35-45 days after planting.

**Availability:** These squash are prevalent throughout the state and are considered prolific once they start to produce fruit. Zucchini is found in local supermarkets year-round but is most abundant in farmer's markets and home gardens July through September.

**Eating:** Squash can be eaten fresh out of the garden with or without the skin by simply rinsing well and removing the stem end. It can also be cut and steamed or baked and used in many recipes.

**Selecting:** Whether purchasing or picking zucchini—choose firm, slender zucchini with a bright green color and free of wrinkled skin and soft spots. For best quality, harvest zucchini when it is young and tender, about 6 to 8 inches long and about 2 inches in diameter. As zucchini gets longer and bigger around, it becomes tougher and develops more seeds. These larger zucchini can be shredded and used in zucchini bread, cake or cookies. For best results, first scoop out seeds and pulp with the tip of a spoon.  
<http://outagamie.uwex.edu/flp/documents/07gotzucchinigreen.pdf>

**Cleaning and Preparing:** Wash zucchini just before preparation using cool water to remove any extra dirt or debris. Unlike winter squash, zucchini

skins/peels are tender and may be left intact to add color and nutrients.

**Storing:** Store fresh picked or purchased zucchini in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 1 week for best quality. Be sure the zucchini is dry and unwashed when you put it in the bag as moisture will encourage mold and spoilage.

[ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/2129/1894.rtf](http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/2129/1894.rtf)

You can also store unwashed zucchini in perforated plastic bags (marketed as “fresh produce” bags) in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator; wash zucchini just before preparation. “You can either purchase perforated plastic bags or make small holes with a sharp object in unperforated plastic bags (about 20 holes per medium-size bag),” according to the Postharvest Technology Research and Information Center, Department of Pomology, University of California, Davis  
<http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/FVStorage.pdf>.

For best quality, use zucchini within 3 to 4 days. Wash zucchini just before preparation. Zucchini makes a quick addition to meals as it doesn't have to be peeled!  
<http://outagamie.uwex.edu/flp/documents/07gotzucchinigreen.pdf>

**Cooking:** Zucchini is best if cooked when fresh and small as it will have more moisture. Steaming produces the crispest, least soggy vegetable. If using zucchini in a casserole recipe, it may be

parboiled or steamed to remove some of the moisture. Or make allowances of the amount of moisture to avoid having an extra runny result!  
[ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/2129/1894.rtf](http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/2129/1894.rtf)

#### Incorporation into other recipes and meals:

- ✓ Slice, marinate (try balsamic vinegar) and grill a variety of vegetables including zucchini, asparagus, green onions, eggplant, and mushrooms. They're delicious!
- ✓ Cut up veggies like carrots, zucchini and potatoes. Add them to your favorite meatloaf or soup recipes.
- ✓ Take your favorite lasagna recipe and try adding different combinations of your favorite vegetables between the layers: mushrooms, spinach, broccoli, carrots, zucchini, onions, or eggplant. Be creative.
- ✓ Add raw zucchini to lettuce and pasta salads. Cut zucchini into sticks and serve with a dip.
- ✓ Slice zucchini, sauté in oil over medium heat for about 5 minutes until tender crisp; toss into heated pasta sauce for a veggie-packed pasta topping.

**Nutrition Highlights:** One medium zucchini (about 1 cup raw) has about 35 calories. It is a good source of vitamins, C, A, and several B vitamins. To obtain the full benefit of fiber contained in the squash, make certain to leave the skin intact. Zucchini also contains smaller amounts of valuable minerals such as potassium and manganese.

**Growing:** All squash prefer organic, rich, well-drained, sandy soils for best growth. Most soils in Utah will grow squash provided they are well drained. For additional details on successful planting and cultivating zucchini, refer to USU Extension factsheet "Summer and Winter Squash in the Garden" available at:  
[http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/HG\\_2004-09.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/HG_2004-09.pdf)

**Preserving:** Summer squash is not recommended for home canning. However, it can be successfully frozen, pickled or dried.

- **Freezing** - Select squash when 5 to 7 inches long and rind is tender and seeds small. Simply wash and cut in pieces. Blanch 1/4-inch slices 3 minutes and 1 1/2-inch slices for 6 minutes. Chill immediately in ice water, pack in freezer containers, date and freeze.
- **Pickling-** Bread-and-Butter Zucchini  
16 cups fresh zucchini, sliced  
4 cups onion, thinly sliced  
½ cup canning or pickling salt  
4 cups white vinegar (5%)  
2 cups sugar  
4 Tbsp. mustard seed  
2 Tbsp. celery seed  
2 tsp. ground turmeric  
Cover zucchini and onion slices with 1 inch of water and salt. Let stand 2 hours and drain thoroughly. Combine vinegar, sugar, and spices. Bring to a boil and add zucchini and onions. Simmer 5 minutes and fill hot jars with mixture and pickling solution, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel. Adjust lids and process pints or quarts 15 minutes, altitudes 1,000-6,000 ft. in boiling water canner.
- **Drying-** Use only young, tender summer squash. Wash, peel, slice in strips or rounds ¼-inch thick. Steam/blanch 2½ to 3 minutes. Drain and pat dry with paper towel. Place in dehydrator for 2½ to 3 hours or sun-dry 6-8 hours.

#### **References:**

1. [ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/2129/1894.rtf](http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/2129/1894.rtf)
2. <http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/FVStorage.pdf>
3. <http://outagamie.uwex.edu/flp/documents/07gotzucchinigreen.pdf>
4. <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/ciq-zucchini.shtml>
5. [http://snap.nal.usda.gov/nal\\_display/index.php?info\\_center=15&tax\\_level=5&tax\\_subject=261&topic\\_id=2131&level3\\_id=6589&level4\\_id=11019&level5\\_id=20442](http://snap.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=15&tax_level=5&tax_subject=261&topic_id=2131&level3_id=6589&level4_id=11019&level5_id=20442)
6. USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning, 2009

## **Beef & Parmesan Pasta**

Makes 4 servings

(Source: Kaiti Roeder, RD, Nebraska Beef Council and Cattlemen's Beef Association – Beef, It's What's for Dinner. For more recipes made with zucchini, enter the word "zucchini" in the recipe search feature at [www.nebeef.org/recipe\\_search.asp](http://www.nebeef.org/recipe_search.asp) and at [www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com](http://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com)).

### **Ingredients:**

1 ½ pounds ground beef  
1 can (14 to 14½ ounces) ready-to-serve beef broth  
1 can (15½ ounces) Italian-style diced tomatoes, undrained  
2 cups uncooked bow tie pasta  
2 cups sliced zucchini (1/4-inch)  
¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese

### **Instructions:**

Brown ground beef in large nonstick skillet over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes or until beef is not pink, breaking up into ¾-inch crumbles. Remove from skillet with slotted spoon; set aside. Pour off drippings. Combine broth, tomatoes and pasta in same skillet, pushing pasta into liquid; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer, uncovered, 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in zucchini; continue cooking 5 minutes or until pasta is tender. Return beef to skillet. Stir in ½ cup of the cheese; heat through. Sprinkle with remaining ¼ cup cheese before serving.

## **Lemon Rosemary Zucchini**

Makes 4 servings

(source: American Institute for Cancer Research ([www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org)) and featured in the revised edition of The New American Plate.)

### **Ingredients:**

1 T extra virgin olive oil  
1 medium yellow bell pepper, diced  
2 tsp finely minced fresh rosemary  
2 cups chopped zucchini (2 medium)  
1-3 tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice, or to taste  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

### **Instructions:**

In medium non-stick skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add yellow pepper and rosemary and sauté 2 minutes. Add zucchini and salt and pepper, to taste. Continue to sauté for another 4 to 5 minutes or until zucchini is just tender. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice.

**Nutritional Information:** Per serving: 46 calories, 3g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 4 g carbohydrate, 1 g protein, 1 g dietary fiber, 6 mg sodium.

## **CROCK POT CREOLE ZUCCHINI**

2 pounds zucchini (4 cups)  
1 small chopped green pepper  
1 small chopped onion  
1 clove minced garlic  
1 tsp salt  
¼ tsp pepper  
4 peeled and chopped tomatoes  
2 T butter  
2 T parsley

Cut zucchini into ¼ inch slices. In slow-cooking pot, combine zucchini with green pepper, onion, garlic, salt and pepper. Top with chopped tomatoes and butter. Cover and cook on high two hours or until tender. Sprinkle with chopped parsley. Makes six to seven servings.

[http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FN\\_Harvest\\_2007-02pr.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FN_Harvest_2007-02pr.pdf)

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