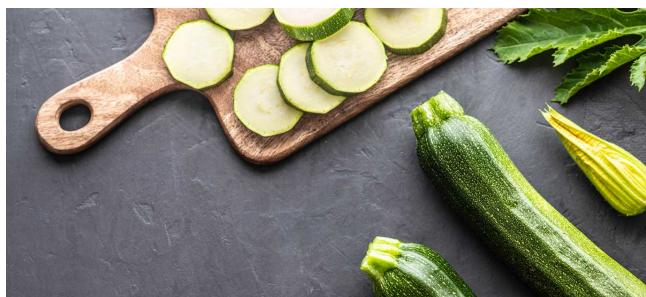




Everything You Need to Know About Zucchini

By Mary Margaret Chappell
2022-07-13 12:42:37



Zucchini is an ultra-versatile vegetable. Read on for everything you need to know about the beloved summer bumper crop, including how to select, store, and prepare it; what to do with an oversize zucchini; and more.

What Is Zucchini?

Zucchini are members of the gourd family along with cucumbers, melons, and pumpkins (which are all fruits, botanically speaking, but regarded as vegetables when it comes to culinary use). They're classified as summer squash because they're harvested before they fully mature, while their skins are thin and tender and their seeds are small and edible. Yellow or crookneck squash—which has a bulbous base and thin, sometimes curved neck—is another summer squash cultivar and is usually grown and sold alongside zucchini.

The word zucchini comes from the Italian *zucchini*, which means “little squash.” North Americans adopted the word for the squash cultivar, which was first developed in Italy in the 19th century. Cooks in the British Isles appropriated the French word, *courgette*, for the veggies. They also have a separate term for a mature zucchini: marrow. (Kate Middleton famously made marrow jam for the queen the first time she spent Christmas with the royal family.)

Types of Zucchini

Dark-green, elongated zucchini varieties are probably the most familiar to cooks. Zucchini can also be jade green, lemon yellow, or striped, bulbous or round. Round zucchini varieties are especially good for stuffing.

How to Cook with Zucchini

Zucchini sometimes gets a bad rap as a vegetable that's bland or watery. In truth, it has a delicate, grassy taste that surprisingly holds its own when paired with bold, spicy flavors. What's more, zucchini's tender flesh works well in everything from raw salads to slow-cooked stews.

Raw

Use sliced or diced raw zucchini the same way you would cucumber in salads and [sushi](#). (Zucchini won't be as juicy as cucumber but will give dishes a similar crunch.) Spiralize larger specimens to make “zoodles” for salads or [Zoodle Rolls](#) or shave lengthwise for a [Ribbioned Zucchini Salad](#).

Sautéed/Stir-Fried

Add sliced or diced zucchini to a [veggie sauté](#) or stir-fry, or [water-fry](#) zucchini slices or cubes in a skillet with garlic and/or onions for 5 to 6 minutes for a light, easy side dish. Quick-cook zucchini noodles in a large skillet for a veggie alternative to pasta.

Roasted/Grilled

When using zucchini in a roasted vegetable recipe or stringing chunks on [kabobs](#), pair them with other veggies that cook in the same amount of time. Onions, eggplant, tomatoes, and mushrooms, like in our [Grilled Squash and Mushrooms with Fresh Herbs](#), are all good choices.

To roast or grill zucchini on its own: Halve small zucchini lengthwise or cut larger specimens into ½-inch thick planks or coins. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet, sprinkle with your favorite seasonings, and roast in a 400°F oven for 30 to 35 minutes, or until browned

(continued)

Everything You Need to Know About Zucchini

By Mary Margaret Chappell
July 13 2022

and tender, turning once. Alternatively, you can cook the zucchini on a grill 5 to 8 minutes. Long slabs can go directly on the grill; rounds work better in a grill basket that keeps them from falling through the grates.

Stewed

[Ratatouille](#) wouldn't be ratatouille without zucchini—and with good reason. Zucchini becomes velvety soft and meltingly tender and absorbs all the flavors of savory soups and stews.

Baked

We couldn't have an article about zucchini without mentioning our [Zecret Vegan Zucchini Bread](#). It calls for avocado along with grated zucchini to keep the cake-like treat moist and tender. [Oven-baked fritters](#) are another great use for grated zucchini.

(continued)

Everything You Need to Know About Zucchini

By Mary Margaret Chappell
July 13 2022

Air-Fried

Make a batch of zucchini fries by cooking coins or strips in [an air fryer](#) 18 to 20 minutes at 400°F, shaking once or twice during the cooking time.

How to Choose and Store Zucchini

When shopping for zucchini, look for vibrant-colored vegetables with stems that don't look woody or dry. Give each vegetable a squeeze to make sure it is very firm. Opt for small- to medium-size specimens, no longer than 8 inches and no heavier than ½ pound. Larger zucchini means larger seeds and thicker skin, which can both be tough or bitter.

Zucchini will keep up to 3 days at room temperature. In the refrigerator, zucchini will keep 1 to 2 weeks in a paper bag or dry, ventilated container.

Because of zucchini's high moisture content, it should be [blanched](#) or cooked before it is frozen.

What to Do with Oversized Zucchini

On the vine, zucchini can grow as much as 2 inches in 24 hours, meaning they can go from tiny and tender to big and gourd-like in a matter of days. As zucchini get bigger, they become more like their other squash relatives with harder skin, bigger seeds, and spongier flesh. Once zucchinis reach this state, treat them like winter squash by peeling and seeding them before adding them to recipes.

When to Peel

The only time you should peel zucchini is if it's extra large (see above) or has developed a bitter taste during storage. Otherwise, the skin gives zucchini dishes color, flavor, and additional nutrients.

How to Prepare Zucchini Flowers/Zucchini Blossoms

Bright yellow zucchini flowers, aka squash blossoms, are an extra bonus in a vegetable garden and a hot gourmet

item in restaurants. Try filling them with a creamy dip and serving as an appetizer or slicing them lengthwise to add to salads. They also make a fabulous decoration for a [Festive Sourdough Focaccia](#). Learn more about cooking with [squash blossoms here](#).

Nutrition

One medium [zucchini](#) contains nearly 2 grams of fiber and is a good source of folate, potassium, and vitamin A. At just 33 calories, that medium zucchini is dense in nutrients but not calories.

Our favorite Ways to Eat Zucchini

Ready to get cooking? Check out our [24 Best Vegan Zucchini Recipes](#), from [Bread](#) to [Soups](#) to [Salads](#).

(continued)

Everything You Need to Know About Zucchini

By Mary Margaret Chappell
July 13 2022

For more guidance in healthy cooking, check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a plant-based path. To learn more about a whole-food, plant-based diet, visit our [Plant-Based Primer](#).