



# Ingredient IQ: Squash Blossoms

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*Editor's Note: In January 2019, the Institute of Culinary Education launched the Natural Gourmet Center, a plant-centric and wellness-driven culinary arts program. We'll be featuring plant-based cooking tips from their instructors here.*

With summer comes the annual bumper crop of summer squash, and, at my home, zucchini takes center stage. Skewered and grilled, stuffed and roasted, grated into slaw or pureed into a refreshing soup, zucchini is as quick-cooking and versatile as summer foods go. For most of us, zucchini is nothing new—but zucchini *flowers*, aka squash blossoms, are a different story. Here's how to enhance your summer spreads by picking up a half dozen or more blooms when squash blossoms appear at your market.

## What Are Squash Blossoms?

Sometimes called zucchini flowers, squash blossoms are the bright orange edible flowers that grow on squash plants. The flowers have a mild flavor that is reminiscent of zucchini.

## How to Use Squash Blossoms in Everyday Cooking

Include the beauty and delicate flavor of squash blooms at any meal.

**Flower-up breakfast:** Add petals and their stamens to nut-yogurt bowls or fruit salads; toss petals into hot oats during the last moments of cooking or tear into cold cereals along with berries, nuts, and seeds.

**Get floral with lunch:** Toss petals, chopped stamens, and stems into lettuces for a vibrant and delicious twist on your usual mixed greens.

**Stuff them for mains, sides, and snacks:** Mix up a batch of basil-infused pine-nut “ricotta” (such as the ricotta found in Forks Over Knives’ [Spinach Lasagna](#)) and stuff flowers with the creamy filling. Chill and serve with toasted whole grain bread and a drizzle of aged

balsamic vinegar.

## How to Shop for Squash Blossoms

You may see an odd squash blossom or two in a mix of baby vegetables, but for a meal-worthy amount, look for packs of intact and healthy-looking blossoms sold all on their own. You can usually find these in the “local” section of your favorite grocery store or at farmers markets. Wherever you shop, squash blossoms are usually around for a limited time; that's because they break down quickly after harvest. (Hint: Don't buy flowers that are wilted or bruised.)

## How to Store and Prepare Them

Once home, store flowers loosely away from too much moisture or cold. Try bundling a bouquet in lightly dampened paper towels in your fridge's crisper drawer. Try to use within a day or two, or cook and store unused portions for later use. Depending on where you purchase them, your blossoms may or may not need washing. If you are planning on cooking the flowers, don't bother with a rinse; just look out for aphids and ladybugs and shoo those away! With cold preparations, a gentle rinse and pat dry is all you need.

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