

## Vegetables and Fruits for Health: Zucchini and Summer Squash

*Revised and updated by Extension Educator Kate Yerxa, University of Maine Cooperative Extension.*

*Original by Retired Extension Nutrition Specialist Nellie Hedstrom, University of Maine Cooperative Extension*

**T**here are two main types of squash: summer and winter. Winter squash varieties – such as acorn, butternut, and buttercup – are picked at the mature stage. They have hard shells with firm flesh and seeds.

Zucchini and other summer squash varieties, which are harvested at the immature stage, have soft shells and tender, light-colored flesh. Other varieties of summer squash include patty pan, yellow crookneck, and yellow straightneck.

### **Nutrition Information**

Like cucumbers, summer squash are 95 percent water. The high water content makes summer squash a low-calorie food. A cup of raw zucchini contains only 20 calories. Summer squash are generally a good source of vitamin C, with the amount of vitamin C varying by variety. They are also a good source of potassium.

### **Selection**

Harvest summer squash fruits from your garden when they are still small or medium in size. You may find that if you leave them just one more day, they will be too large to have the mild, firm texture and flavor that is best. Large summer squash fruits have very large seeds, tough rinds and stringy, coarse flesh.

In Maine, look for summer squash from local farmers from July through September. When buying from your local farmer or supermarket, choose squash that are firm and heavy for their size. Skins should be sound, glossy, and without nicks, bruises, or decay. Look for bright green or yellow squash, and avoid squash that are shriveled and dried out.

### **Storage**

Store unwashed summer squash in the refrigerator crisper in an open or perforated plastic bag. From the market, the squash will keep for up to a week. From your garden, you can expect them to keep slightly longer.



## Preparation

Wash and trim summer squash before cooking. Peel and seed any older, tougher, oversized squash. Cut squash to appropriate size when preparing your recipe.

**Raw:** For a low-calorie snack, wash and cut small squash into strips, rounds, or chunks and eat them with low-fat dips or hummus—or add them raw to salads.

**Baking:** Cleaned squash can be sliced or left whole and baked with seasonings, herbs, and other vegetables. Try it with onions, tomatoes, and breadcrumbs for a tasty dish. Cook in a 350°F oven for 30 to 35 minutes. Young, tender squash cut in slices or halves take less time to cook. Larger, tougher squash should be seeded before baking.

**Steaming:** Cleaned squash can be cut into bite-sized pieces or rounds and placed in a steaming basket over 1 inch of water. Cover squash, bring water to a boil, and steam for 4 to 5 minutes. Small squash (1 to 2 inches long) can be steamed whole, but will take 10 to 12 minutes.

**Sautéing or stir-frying:** Both methods are great ways to prepare squash. Slices or chunks can be sautéed in a little oil, in water, or in stock. Add squash to a stir-fry with other light-flavored vegetables. Stir and toss the vegetables while cooking. The cooking time for both methods is only 3 to 6 minutes.

## Microwaved Zucchini or Yellow Squash

Serves: 4

### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon water
- 4 cups zucchini or yellow squash, sliced
- 2 tablespoons almonds, sliced
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1/2 teaspoon marjoram
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese

### Directions

1. In a 3-quart microwavable casserole dish, combine onion and water. Cover and microwave on high power for 2 minutes.
2. Stir in zucchini or yellow squash. Cover and cook on high for 5 minutes. Drain.
3. Brown almonds in a small skillet in melted butter. Sprinkle over drained vegetables. Sprinkle with marjoram, lemon juice, and pepper.
4. Toss, then cover and microwave on high for 1 minute.
5. Before serving, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup(s) (144g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 3g	<b>4%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 30mg	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 7g	<b>3%</b>
Dietary Fiber 2g	<b>7%</b>
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	<b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 4g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	<b>0%</b>
Calcium 53mg	<b>4%</b>
Iron 1mg	<b>6%</b>
Potassium 579mg	<b>10%</b>
<small>*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

## Zucchini Bake Serves: 6

### Ingredients

- 3 cups zucchini, sliced
- 2 cups tomatoes, cut in chunks
- 1 cup onions, sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- dash cayenne pepper

### Directions

1. Arrange zucchini, tomato, and onion in a lightly greased casserole dish.
2. Sprinkle seasoning over the mixture.
3. Bake at 350°F for 30 to 45 minutes, depending on how well-cooked you want the vegetables.

Nutrition Facts	
6 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>3/4 cup(s) (159g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 0g	<b>0%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 520mg	<b>23%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 8g	<b>3%</b>
Dietary Fiber 1g	<b>4%</b>
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	<b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 2g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	<b>0%</b>
Calcium 58mg	<b>4%</b>
Iron 1mg	<b>6%</b>
Potassium 298mg	<b>6%</b>
<small>*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

## Squash Stuffing Serves: 8

### Ingredients

- 1 small package herbed stuffing
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 2 cups zucchini, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 3 carrots, shredded
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth

### Directions

1. Put the herbed stuffing, reserving 1 cup, in a 3-quart casserole dish.
2. Combine melted butter, zucchini, onion, carrots and broth with the stuffing mix.
3. Pat lightly into the casserole dish.
4. Sprinkle the reserved stuffing cubes on top.
5. Bake at 350°F for 45 minutes.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>1/2 cup(s) (130g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 3.5g	<b>4%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 300mg	<b>13%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 19g	<b>7%</b>
Dietary Fiber 1g	<b>4%</b>
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	<b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 4g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	<b>0%</b>
Calcium 19mg	<b>2%</b>
Iron 1mg	<b>6%</b>
Potassium 253mg	<b>6%</b>
<small>*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

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