

Wise Notes

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What to Do with Zucchini!

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 used in zucchini bread; scoop out seeds and pulp with the tip of a spoon.

Store unwashed zucchini in perforated plastic 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. For best quality, use zucchini within about 3 to 4 days.

Wash zucchini just before preparation. Zucchini makes a quick addition to meals as it doesn't have to be peeled! Before you give your zucchini away, here are some suggestions:

- 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.

- 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.

Easy Cheesy Squash

Ingredients:

4 small zucchini, sliced (option- a variety of different types of squash)
2 fresh tomatoes, chopped
¼ cup chopped onion
1 finely chopped jalapeno
1 teaspoon oil or non-stick cooking spray
garlic and pepper to taste
1 can (16 ounces) kernel corn, drained
½ cup reduced fat Monterrey
Jack cheese or other favorite cheese, shredded

Directions:

Wash your hands and clean your cooking area. Clean the tops of canned food items before opening them. Wash zucchini, tomatoes, onion and jalapeno. Cut vegetables as directed. Heat skillet with oil or cooking spray over medium heat. Add zucchini; cook until firmly tender. Add tomatoes, onion, and jalapeno. Season with garlic and pepper to taste. Cook uncovered until veggies are tender. Reduce heat and add corn and cheese. Mix well and cook until cheese is melted.

Nutrition Facts per ½ cup serving: Calories, 90; Total Fat-3.5g; Saturated Fat-1.5g; Sodium-210 mg; Total Carbohydrate-10g; Dietary Fiber-2g; Sugar-5g; Protein-3g.

The source for this information came from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's Better Living for Texans program. For more information contact Wise County's Texas AgriLife Extension office at 940/627-3341.