

So Much Zucchini!

Brenda Davis, RD

If you have a garden, chances are that you have been blessed with more zucchini than you know what to do with. If you are not a gardener but have family and friends who are, you have likely been the recipient of your fair share of zucchini. If you have ever wondered what to do with all that zucchini, this article will provide you with some creative ideas!

Zucchini is also known as courgette in some countries such as the UK. Another common name is marrow (for large zucchini) or baby marrow for small zucchini. From a culinary perspective, there is quite a difference between small and large zucchini. Small zucchini have a fresh, mild flavor and delicate texture. They are delicious in salads, stir-fries, and many Mediterranean dishes. When selecting small zucchini, look for those that are 6-8 inches long with shiny skin. Avoid zucchini with wrinkled or collapsed sections. Large zucchini has less flavor, tough skin, and can be hard or pulpy inside. It is less suitable for use in salads. When zucchini begins to resemble a baseball bat, it is best stuffed and baked, stewed, used in soups, or grated and baked into bread, muffins, or cakes. The largest zucchini on record was over 8 feet long and was grown in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.



Types of Zucchini

Zucchini is a type of summer squash that belongs to the Cucurbitaceae family. Although commonly referred to as a vegetable, zucchini is botanically classified as a fruit because it comes from the flower of a plant. You might be surprised to learn that the zucchini flowers are edible and are considered a delicacy in some cuisines. They can be stuffed, sauteed, or used to garnish salads. There are over 50 varieties of zucchini. The most widely available are:

1. **Green Zucchini:** This common type of zucchini is readily available in most grocery stores. It has dark green smooth skin and can be used in any recipe that calls for zucchini.
2. **Yellow Zucchini:** Also known as golden zucchini, it is similar in taste and texture to the green variety but has a bright yellow skin. It works beautifully in dishes that benefit from its bright color. We use it below in a Golden zucchini dressing.
3. **Round Zucchini:** Also known as 8-ball zucchini, these are small and spherical, perfect for stuffing. Round zucchini can be either green or yellow.
4. **Costata Romanesco:** An Italian heirloom variety, this zucchini has a distinctive ribbed texture, and has firm, meaty flesh, and greater depth of flavor than many other varieties. It is perfect for grilling or making zucchini pasta.
5. **Black Beauty:** This zucchini is a dark green color. It tends to be long and thin but is similar in flavor to common green zucchini. It is handy for making air-fried zucchini.



6. **Bianco Di Trieste:** This is a pale green zucchini with glossy skin. It is shorter than many other varieties and has a delicate texture and flavor.



7. **Pattypan Squash:** Also known as scallop squash, this zucchini is shaped like a flattened sphere with scalloped edges. It can be yellow or green and is tender and delicious on the BBQ or sauteed.



Zucchini Around the World

Zucchini is a versatile vegetable that appears in both sweet and savory dishes around the world. Although it is generally served cooked, it can also be eaten raw in salads or as a key ingredient in dehydrated crackers or breads. It can also be cut with a spiralizer to create “zoodles”, a low-calorie replacement for pasta noodles.

Zucchini, along with many other squash varieties, originated in Mesoamerica and was cultivated in Northern Italy in the early 1900s. Some common uses are highlighted below:

1. **Australia:** A favorite recipe is a frittata-like dish called zucchini slice.
2. **Italy:** Zucchini is often fried, baked, boiled, and used in mixed dishes such as minestrone soup.
3. **France:** Zucchini is featured in ratatouille, a vegetable stew with zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants.
4. **Middle East:** Stuffed zucchini, or "Kousa Mahshi," is a popular dish where zucchini is hollowed out and filled with rice, a protein such as lentils, and vegetables. It is then simmered in a tomato-based sauce.

5. **Mexican Cuisine:** Zucchini is often used in soups, stews, and grilled dishes. "Calabacitas," a traditional dish, combines zucchini with corn, tomatoes, and cheese.
6. **Turkey:** Zucchini is the main ingredient in a traditional pancake dish called mucver.
7. **American Cuisine:** In the United States, zucchini is used in a variety of dishes, from breads and muffins to salads and casseroles. Zucchini noodles, or "zoodles," have become a popular low-carb alternative to pasta.
8. **Eastern Europe:** Zucchini is often coated in flour or semolina and baked or fried and served with sour cream. Plant-based sour creams are easy to make.



Zucchini Recipes

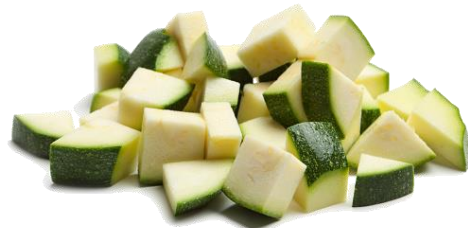
Dreamy Zucchini Soup

Makes 8 generous servings

This soup provides a delicious way to use a large amount of zucchini. If you enjoy creamy soups, you will love this one! You can replace the cashews with raw sunflower seeds, for a more budget-wise variation. This recipe was adapted from 'Dairy-Free and Delicious', by Brenda Davis, Jo Stepaniak, and Bryanna Clark Grogan. Thanks to my friend, Margie Colclough, for the brilliant idea of adding garbanzos to boost protein and overall nutrition! If you like, leave half the garbanzos whole (do not blend) to add texture to the soup.

Ingredients

- 8 cups zucchini, coarsely chopped
- 1 large onion, diced
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 cups vegetable broth*
- ½ cup raw cashews, rinsed (can be soaked for 2-4 hours and drained to increase smoothness)
- 1 cup roasted red pepper, rinsed and chopped (or 1 large raw red pepper)
- ½ cup tahini
- 1/3 cup nutritional yeast flakes
- 2 cups cooked garbanzo beans (or 1 x 19 oz can, drained and rinsed)
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ cup chopped fresh dill (or 1 tablespoon dried dill)
- Pepper to taste
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice



Finely chopped steamed kale (about 1 cup per serving)
(optional)

Instructions

1. Place the zucchini, onion, garlic, and vegetable broth in a large soup pot, and bring to a boil.
2. Lower the heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Cool slightly.
3. Blend in batches until smooth. Return the blended soup base to the pot leaving 2 cups behind, which stay in the blender.
4. Add the cashews and blend until very smooth.
5. Add the red pepper, tahini, nutritional yeast, and garbanzo beans. Blend until smooth.
6. Pour the mixture into the soup pot. Add allspice and oregano. Heat gently, stirring often, until slightly thickened.
7. Add fresh dill.
8. Serve each bowl with ½ cup steamed greens and 2 teaspoons of fresh lemon juice. Sprinkle each bowl with dried red peppers or with roasted, diced red pepper, if desired.

*Vegetable broth can be replaced with 8 cups of water plus ¼ cup of light miso.



Seedy Zucchini Crackers

These are my favorite crackers. They do require a dehydrator. Unlike regular crackers made with flour, fat, and salt, these are made entirely from whole seeds, vegetables, and herbs.

Ingredients

- 2 cups sunflower seeds
- 1 cup pumpkin seeds
- 6 cups water
- 1 cup flaxseeds
- 1/2 cup ground flaxseeds
- 3 cups water
- 3 cups chopped zucchini
- 3 cups other coarsely chopped vegetables (e.g., butternut squash, carrots, peppers, kale, onions, tomatoes)
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley, basil, dill, or other fresh herbs (optional)
- 2 Tbsp ginger, grated or 2 cloves garlic, minced (optional)
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 tsp salt (optional)



Instructions

1. Soak sunflower and pumpkin seeds in 6 cups water for at least 2-4 hours.
2. Soak whole and ground flaxseeds in 3 cups water for at least 1 hour.
3. In a food processor fitted with an S-blade, process zucchini and other vegetables into a soupy mash. Add herbs, ginger or garlic and pulse until thoroughly mixed. Place vegetables in a large bowl.
4. Drain sunflower and pumpkin seeds using a colander and add to vegetables. Stir in whole and ground flaxseeds (do not try to drain!), red pepper flakes, and salt (if using), and stir well.

5. Divide mixture onto 6 nonstick sheets on dehydrator trays. Spread evenly using a metal spatula or flat rubber spatula.
6. Dehydrate for about 8 hours at 110 degrees. Score the crackers (make squares or rectangles) using a knife or metal spatula (be careful not to cut the Teflex sheets). Turn the crackers onto a mesh dehydrator tray and dehydrate for another 12 hours or until dry and crispy.
7. Break crackers apart along the score lines. If they are not scored, you can break them apart by hand, but they will not be evenly shaped.
8. Store in an airtight container in a freezer to retain crispiness.

Variations:

1. Replace ½ cup of sunflower seeds with chia seeds, sesame seeds or other seeds.
2. Reserve the salt for the top of the crackers instead of adding to the batter.



Golden Zucchini Dressing

Makes: 3 cups

Golden zucchini dressing is a source of omega-3 fatty acids, riboflavin, and other B vitamins. If you don't have yellow zucchini, you can peel green zucchini and use that or make the Green Goddess variation below.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup hemp seeds
- ¼ cup tahini
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups yellow zucchini, washed and chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ¼ cup lemon juice or apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup nutritional yeast flakes
- 3 tablespoons light miso
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric



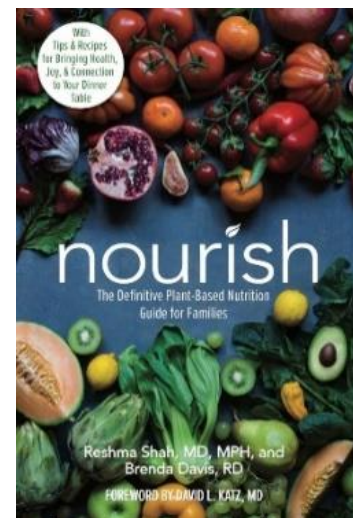
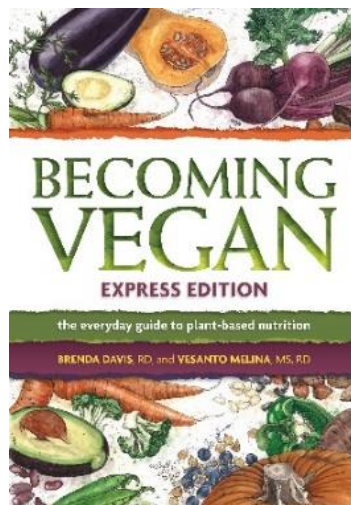
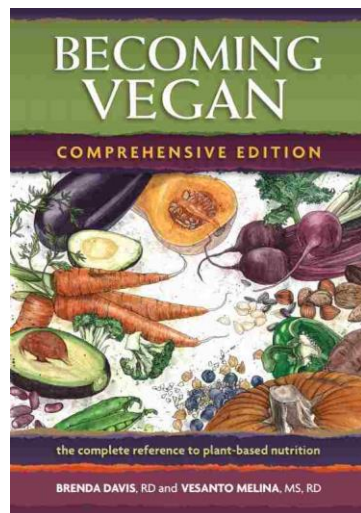
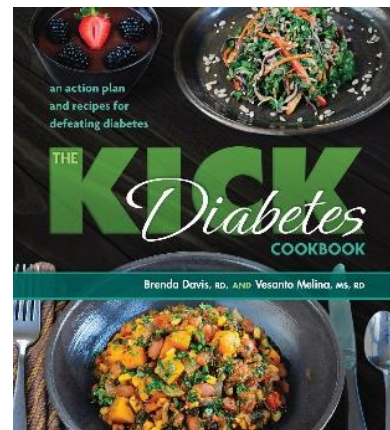
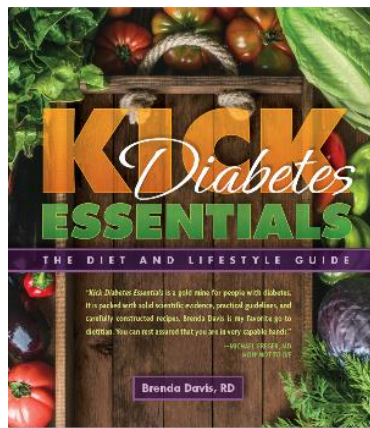
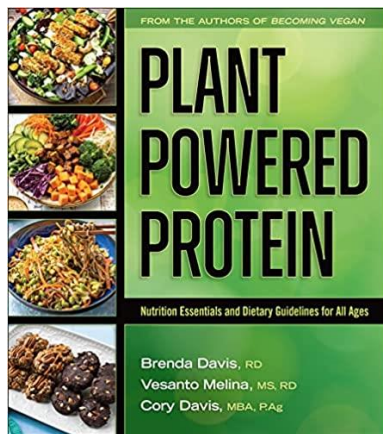
Instructions

1. Place hemp seeds, tahini, zucchini, garlic, lemon juice, nutritional yeast, miso, mustard, cumin, and turmeric and process until smooth.
2. Store in a sealed glass jar in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.



Variation

Green Goddess Dressing: Replace yellow with green zucchini (do not peel). Omit the turmeric and cumin. Add 1 cup of fresh herbs (basil and parsley work very well). Blend well.



This article was originally written for So Many Cooks in the Kitchen. Brenda Davis, RD is a plant-based pioneer and author/co-author of 13 books on plantbased diets. She is co-Author of Nourish: the definitive plant-based nutrition guide for families, Becoming Vegan: Comprehensive and Express Editions and Kick Diabetes Essentials. www.brendadavisrd.com