



Early Care & Education
Classroom Bites

Summer Squash



Green Zucchini



Yellow Zucchini



Costata Romanesco



Yellow Squash



Pattypan Squash



Couasa Squash



Zephyr Squash



Eight Ball Zucchini

Did You Know

- Zucchini is the most common variety of summer squash. Other varieties include: pattypan squash, crookneck squash, sunburst squash, yellow squash, chayote squash, and opo squash. Summer squash are harvested in the summer and have thin skins and soft flesh. Winter squash, on the other hand, are harvested later in the season and have thick rinds.
- While most squash varieties were brought from America to Europe, zucchini originated in Italy. Zucchini means "small squash" in Italian.
- Summer squash are members of the Cucurbitaceae (Cucurbit) family, which includes melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, and gourds.
- Summer squash are referred to as vegetables since they are commonly eaten this way, and due to their nutrient make-up, they are included in the vegetable food group. Botanically speaking, summer squash are the immature fruit of the plant.

Gardening

Summer squash are not a significant part of Montana agriculture, but are widely grown in gardens throughout the state. Often people grow so many that they will secretly leave a bag of zucchini on a neighbor's doorstep. Direct seed or transplant summer squash 10 weeks before first frost. Summer squash need full sun and plenty of room to grow. Summer squash can be planted in large containers. Good container varieties include Early Yellow Summer Crookneck and Scallopine.

Selection

Choose squash that have firm, undamaged, and glossy skin. Large summer squash are often tough and bitter, but they can be used in recipes that call for shredded squash, such as zucchini bread. Usually squash between 4-10 inches have good flavor and are not fibrous.

Storage

Store summer squash in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to one week. Wash directly before using.

Nutrition Information

Summer squash are a good source of vitamin C and potassium, and contain manganese and vitamin B₆. Vitamin C helps your body heal from cuts, scrapes and even broken bones! Manganese plays an essential role in such functions as the formation of bones and healthy skeletons.

Cooking

Broil. Set broiler to high, with the rack about six inches from heat. Cut squash in slices and drizzle with olive oil and low-sodium seasoning before placing on a baking sheet. Cook 3-5 minutes or until tender.

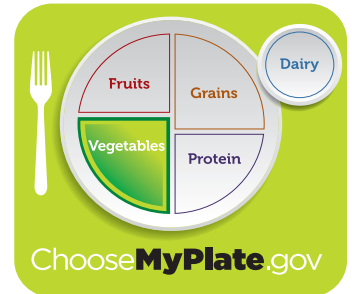
Grate. Add raw, grated squash to green salads, muffins, cookies, or use a spiral slicer to use instead of pasta noodles for added nutrients.

Grill. Pierce sliced squash with a skewer and place over a preheated (medium-high heat) grill. Cook 5-8 minutes or until tender. Pair squash with tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, peppers, or fruit.

Microwave. Place sliced squash in a microwave-safe dish with 2-3 tablespoons of water. Cover and microwave on high for 3-4 minutes or until tender.

Preserve. For more information on preserving summer squash, read the MontGuide Freezing Vegetables. Visit <https://nutrition.msuextension.org/> and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension office to find the guide.

Raw. Rinse and dry squash to enjoy sliced in salads



or dipped in hummus or yogurt. For an easy no-cook salad, toss sliced or diced squash with vinaigrette, place in refrigerator, allow to sit for at least four hours, and serve cold.

Sauté. Heat pan to high, add butter or oil to coat bottom of pan and add sliced squash. Sauté until lightly brown, about 3-5 minutes, or until tender. Remove from heat and use as side dish or add to vegetable dishes, lasagna, pasta, and other dishes.

Season. To enhance flavor, season with allspice, basil, cumin, curry powder, dill, oregano, rosemary, sage, tarragon, and thyme.

Steam. Place sliced or whole squash into steam basket. Steam 6-10 minutes for sliced squash or 12-15 minutes for whole squash.

Adapted from the Summer Squash Food Fact Sheet developed by Montana State University Extension. For the full fact sheet and other resources, visit: <https://nutrition.msuextension.org/>.

Activities

Explore Summer Squash

Developed by: Erin Jackson, Gallatin Valley Farm to School

Montana Early Learning Standards

4.15-Scientific Thinking

2.5-Nutrition

3.5-Print Development/Writing

Description

Compare different varieties of summer squash using observations and descriptions. Discuss the differences between different varieties of summer squash, including; green zucchini, yellow zucchini, pattypan squash, yellow squash. Taste summer squash.

Supplies

- 2 squash per small group of children. Use multiple varieties of summer squash, including: yellow crookneck, yellow straightneck, zucchini, patty pan/scallop.
- Paper bag(s)
- White board
- Student journal and pencil or crayons
- 1 butter knife per group

Directions

1. Place a summer squash in a paper bag, or a few different varieties in different bags. Begin by passing around the paper bag with a summer squash in it and ask children to feel the item without looking. Once all children have felt the item, ask the children to use words to describe what they felt in the bag (e.g., bumpy, smooth, round). Children may also predict what the item is. Write children's ideas on the whiteboard.
2. Ask a few children to share what they think the item is and why, but do not confirm nor deny their guess. Tell the children that you will now unveil the mystery item(s). Slowly take the squash out of the bag and then ask the children to raise their hand if they correctly guessed. Were any of the descriptions correct? Were any incorrect? Did they guess it would be green but really it was yellow? Discuss varieties of squash.
3. Explain that this month's Harvest of the Month crop is summer squash. Ask the children to raise their hand if they have ever tried summer squash. Ask the children to share how they have eaten summer squash in a breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a snack. Today they will all have the opportunity to taste it!
4. Divide the children into small groups and pass out two summer squash of different varieties to each group. Give the children time to observe and compare the squash. Next, ask the children to talk about their observations. What is the same, and what is different?
5. Once the children have completed their observations the teacher will cut the different squash into slices to taste. As a class say "cheers to summer squash" and then taste each variety. Ask the the children to describe the taste and texture differences.
6. Once the children have completed the taste test, compare and contrast observations and make general comparisons between the varieties.

Anyone cutting and handling the squash that will be eaten in the taste test should use proper hand washing procedures. All produce should be washed thoroughly before cooking or consumption.

Recipes

Fresh Summer Squash Salad

This no-cook recipe is perfect for using produce from the school garden.

Developed by: Morgan Kelly, Montana Dietetic Intern

Servings

6

Ingredients

5 small zucchini, rinsed, thinly sliced into half moons, can use any type or a variety of summer squash

7 radishes, rinsed, thinly sliced crosswise

3 carrots, rinsed, thinly sliced crosswise

1 1/2 tsp chopped garlic

3 Tbsp lemon juice

3 tsp Dijon mustard

1 1/2 Tbsp honey

1 1/2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar

Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Wash and prepare all vegetables.
2. In salad bowl, mix garlic, lemon juice, mustard, honey, vinegar, salt, and pepper.
3. Toss in chopped vegetables; stir until all vegetables are coated in dressing.
4. Allow to rest in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes, serve.

Baked Zucchini Chips

Go beyond the zucchini bread--this is a fun way to eat summer squash!

Source: Skinny Mom Blog

Servings

6

Ingredients

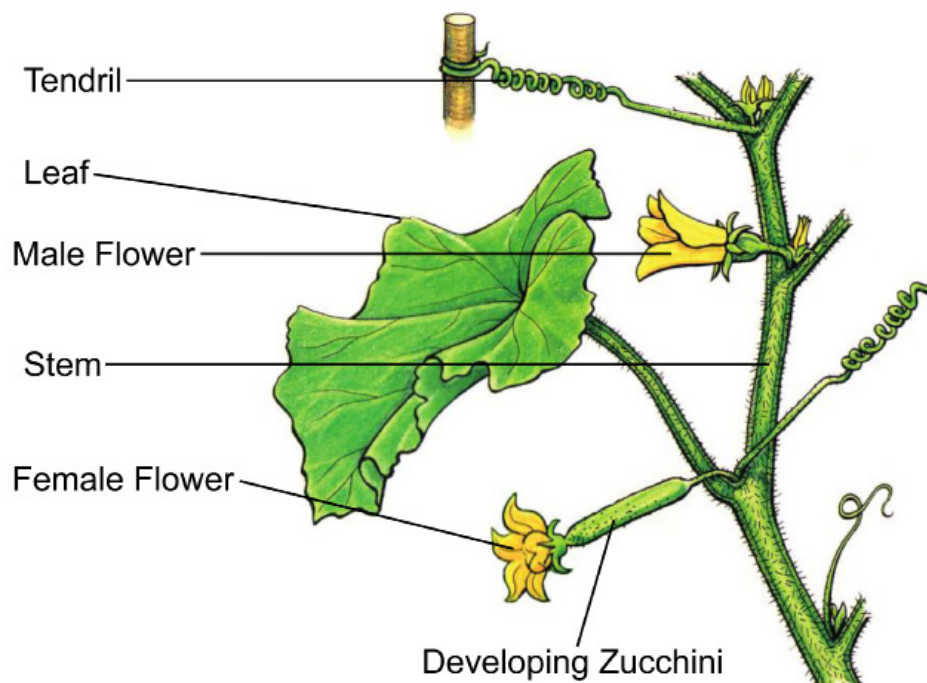
3 small zucchini, thinly sliced

2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 300°F. Lightly mist one baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Slice zucchini into 1/8–1/4-inch thick rounds. Toss zucchini with olive oil to coat evenly and spread zucchini on baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle on salt and pepper.
3. Bake zucchini rounds until browned and crisp, about 25 to 30 minutes, flipping each over halfway through.
4. Check the chips often as cooking times may vary. Rotate the chips around the baking sheet if needed.
5. Once crisp and browned, let cool and store at room temperature. Enjoy the same day for best crunch!



Extend the Fun

Source: HfHK_Winter_Squash_Activity_Plan.pdf

Word Play

Get children moving by adding physical movement to the book *Up, Down and Around*. When veggies grow "up," children reach arms high over head. When veggies grow "down" children reach down to the ground. When veggies grow around and around, children turn in circles.

MELS 4.6–Creative Movement and Dance

Discovery Table

Cut an assortment of summer squash in halves or quarters, and leave some whole. Place vegetables on the "discovery table," "sensory table," or another area of the classroom, so children can explore the feel, smell and looks of the vegetables.

MELS 2.3–Sensorimotor

Tasting Chart

Create a chart with children's names on the left side in rows and the featured fruit and vegetable names on the top in columns. Each month, give children a stamp or sticker in the fruit/vegetable box next to their name if they tasted the fruit or vegetable anytime during the month. Hang the tasting chart in the classroom.

MELS 4.12–Data Analysis



Book Nook

Carlos and the Squash Plant,
by Jan Stevens

The Giant Zucchini, by Catherine Siracusa

I Heard it from Alice Zucchini, by Juanita Havill

Up, Down, and Around, by Katherine Ayers



Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: mtharvestofthemoth.org.

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The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCorps Montana, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemoth.org.

Funds were provided in part by a USDA Team Nutrition Training grant, a USDA Farm to School grant, Montana Healthcare Foundation, Northern Pulse Growers Association, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and Montana School Nutrition Association. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach. This publication was supported by the Grants or Cooperative Agreements Numbers, 6 U58DP004818-03-01 & 5 U58DP004818-03-00.