

# An Unlikely Culinary Column: Defending the Zucchini

By Karen Kain

Zucchini often gets a bad rap, so this week, I am here to defend this fabulous vegetable. We usually have an abundance of zucchini in our garden, but this year we don't seem to have enough. After last summer's threats of being beaten with zucchini when offering one to a neighbor, I realized not everyone appreciates them. I wanted to stick up for this amazing versatile vegetable that is a perfect break from leafy greens.

Zucchini originated in Italy generations ago, making it to America, around the 1920s. The Italian word for squash is "Zucca." Zucchini is one of the easiest vegetables to cultivate and has an overwhelming production, as most of you already know. It is low in fat and contains folate, potassium and vitamin A, B6, B1, B2, B3, and choline. It is also healthy in flavonoid antioxidants like zeaxanthin, carotenes, and lutein, which play a role in slowing down the aging process; they also help with disease prevention due to their free radical properties. Most of the antioxidants are in the skin.

Even though zucchini can grow to massive sizes, bigger does not mean better. The small and medium sized zucchinis from about 6-8 inches long are more flavorful. This brownie recipe was made with the larger sized zucchini and I have to tell you it was a huge hit. Thanks to my lovely neighbor for the share, you know who you are.

I want you to know that I was extremely skeptical when I made the Zucchini Tortillas. This sounded

interesting but I had little faith in the result. I am happy to share with you that I could not make them fast enough and when dipped in salsa and Greek yogurt they are a meal in themselves.

What I love about this fabulous veggie is that you can add it to most any recipe. My favorite way to prepare it is simply stir fried in butter, garlic and Parmesan cheese. I know everything is better with butter and cheese, but I also love zucchini bread and even better when added to most any Italian dish. Thank you for all your recipe shares and have a great week folks.

## The Best Brownies EVER!

### Ingredients:

- 2 Cups Flour
- 1 ½ Cup Sugar
- ½ - ¾ Cup Cocoa powder
- 2 Tsp Baking soda
- 1 Tsp Salt
- 2 Eggs
- 2 Cups Grated zucchini
- 2 Tsp Vanilla
- ½ Cup Vegetable oil

### Directions:

Mix the wet ingredients together and then mix the dry, and combine, then bake for 30 minutes at 350° F, in a 9x13 greased pan. Brownies tend to be uncooked in the center so please allow for the time needed for your oven.



## Zucchini Tortillas

### Ingredients:

- 4 Cups Zucchini, grated
- 1 Large Egg
- ½ Cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- ¼ Cup Bread crumbs
- ½ Tsp Black pepper
- ¼ Tsp Salt
- ¼ Tsp Garlic powder
- ¼ Tsp Ground cumin
- ½ Cup Spicy salsa
- ½ Cup Greek yogurt

### Directions:

Pre-heat oven to 450° F. Remove as much moisture as possible from the zucchini by patting with a paper towel. Add all the ingredients together in a large bowl. Stir to fully incorporate the egg and spices, then drain off any excess liquid that forms. Cover baking sheets with parchment paper. Scoop ¼ cup of zucchini mixture and place it on the baking sheet, flattening it down to make a thin 5 inch circle. Bake tortillas for about 25 minutes, or until they look "crisp" and brown around the edges.

Peel the zucchini tortillas off and serve warm with Greek yogurt and spicy salsa.

## Stuffed Zucchini

### Ingredients:

- 2 Zucchini, large
- 3 Tbs Olive oil
- 1 Cup Onion, chopped
- 1 Tsp Garlic, minced
- 1 Pound Italian sausage
- ½ Tsp Salt
- ¼ Tsp Black pepper
- 1 Cup Italian-style bread crumbs
- 1 Cup Parmesan, grated
- 1 Egg
- 5 Tbs Whole milk

### Directions:

Cut the zucchini in half length-wise and scoop out the seeds. Rub the outside of the zucchini halves with 1 teaspoon of olive oil and place in a 9x13 baking dish. In a skillet over medium heat, sauté the onion in the remaining olive oil until soft. Add the garlic and sausage meat and cook for 5 minutes, or until browned. Drain any excess fat from the pan and discard. Add the salt, pepper, breadcrumbs, and cheese to the skillet and mix to fully combine. In a small bowl, mix the egg and cream together, then add to the skillet, mixing to fully incorporate. Fill the zucchini halves with the sausage mixture. Bake covered with foil for 25 minutes, remove the foil and continue to bake for an additional 20 minutes. The zucchini is cooked when it is fork tender. Serve with a side of Italian sauce.

Karen Kain can be reached at karenkain8@icloud.com.

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