



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER SQUASH



Summer squash grows on long vines or bushes and belong to the Cucurbitaceae family. Like winter squash, summer squash originated in Mesoamerica, stretching from Central Mexico to Costa Rica, over 7,000 years ago. Squash made its way around the world on trade routes over thousands of years. Summer squash has a mild, fresh taste. It can be used fresh for eating raw, or baked, boiled, fried, grilled, roasted, or sautéed. Summer squash can be used in baked goods, salads, soups, stir fries, or stuffed and baked with other vegetables and grains. In Michigan, summer squash is harvested from June through September.



SUMMER SQUASH IS

- A good source of vitamin C*. Vitamin C is important to the body's tissues and supports a healthy immune system.
- A source of folate. Folate supports the production of healthy red blood cells and is important during periods of rapid growth, like pregnancy.

**Foods that are high in vitamin C, calcium and/or iron can help protect you from lead absorption.*

MICHIGAN MADE

Michigan ranks in the top four states nationally for fresh and processed summer and winter squash production. In 2021, Michigan farmers ranked first in the nation for producing over 162 million pounds of squash. Summer squash is popular and easy to grow in home gardens too. In addition to popular summer squash like zucchini and yellow squash, other types of summer squash grown in Michigan include chayote, crookneck, pattypan, and zephyr. Most squash production takes place in the lower 2/3 of Michigan's lower peninsula along the lakeshores.

FUN FACTS

- There are two types of squash, summer and winter.
- Zucchini, yellow squash, and pattypan squash are the most popular types of summer squash. Other types include Coozelle, chayote, and white scallop.
- Summer squash have edible skins and seeds.
- Summer squash can be shades of yellow, green, gray, striped, or multicolored.
- Zucchini was cultivated by farmers in Italy during the mid-1800s into the vegetable we know today.
- Summer squash, winter squash, cucumbers, melons, and gourds are all related.
- Oblong summer squash like zucchini is best harvested when it is 6 to 8 inches long.
- Larger summer squash, 10 inches or longer for oblong varieties, is best used in baked goods like zucchini bread.
- Indigenous Peoples in the Americas refer to squash as one of the "Three Sisters" crops. It is planted in mounds with beans and corn by Indigenous women farmers. The plants nurture each other like family, growing better together. This form of planting became common across North America.
- Summer squash is more than 90% water. In addition to drinking water, eating summer squash can help us stay hydrated.
- Calabacitas is a traditional Mexican vegetable dish made from sautéed zucchini, yellow squash, corn, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and cheese that is served with warm flour tortillas.
- The word zucchini means "little squash" in Italian.
- The word squash comes from the Narragansett Indian Tribe of Rhode Island.

BUYING AND STORING

- Select summer squash that is small and firm with no bruises.
- Store summer squash in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator dry and unwashed in an open plastic or paper bag for up to one to two weeks. Store cut summer squash in an airtight container for up to three days.
- Freeze blanched summer squash in an airtight bag or container for up to six months.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.





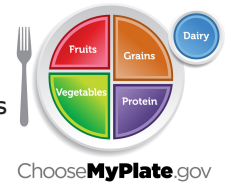
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MORE THAN FRESH

In addition to fresh, summer squash is available frozen. When buying packaged summer squash, be sure to read labels and choose items that are reduced or low-sodium (salt) or no salt added and low in saturated fat.

EAT WITH MYPLATE

MyPlate focuses on whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and half the plate being fruits and vegetables. Summer squash is part of the Vegetable Group. Most people need 2–3 cups of vegetables per day. For more information visit: myplate.gov.



IT ALL COUNTS

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% vegetable and fruit juices count toward your daily MyPlate goals.

SKILLET SUMMER SQUASH

Time: 20 minutes | Makes: 6 servings | Serving Size: About ¾ cup

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories 99, Carbohydrate 4g, Dietary Fiber 1g, Protein 5g, Total Fat 8g, Saturated Fat 3g, Cholesterol 5mg, Sodium 216mg

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
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| 2 tablespoons oil | ¾ teaspoon Italian seasoning |
| 3 garlic cloves, minced or ¾ teaspoons garlic powder | ¼ teaspoon kosher salt |
| 2 medium summer squash, sliced | ¼ teaspoon pepper |
| 1 cup tomatoes, chopped | 2 tablespoons water |
| | ½ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded (optional) |

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oil on medium-high heat in large skillet.
2. Add garlic and sauté for about 30 seconds until soft but not brown.
3. Add squash, tomatoes, Italian seasoning, salt, pepper, and water. Mix gently.
4. Reduce heat to medium, cover and cook for 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
5. Serve hot or cold. If using, garnish with Parmesan before serving.

CHANGE IT UP

- Add ½ cup each sliced bell peppers, eggplant, and/or mushrooms.
- Add 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh basil, marjoram, or thyme in Step 3 or as a garnish.
- Serve with brown rice, corn bread, eggs, grits, mashed potatoes, pasta, or white beans.

(Recipe adapted from "Summer Squash, Italian Style" by the Connecticut Food Policy Council as listed at http://www.ct.gov/ctnutrition/lib/ctnutrition/cookbook_x1a-rev1_12-30-07.pdf)



TRY THIS

- Add any variety of fresh summer squash to wraps and salads and serve with dips.
- Slice zucchini and yellow squash lengthwise and place on a hot grill for 2–3 minutes or until grill marks form. Flip to cook the other side and serve.
- Use summer squash in place of pasta. Microwave or steam sliced squash and top with marinara or pesto and herbs. To give squash the appearance of noodles, use a vegetable spiralizer.