

A Winter Warning

By Karla Jans

Very soon, catalogs are going to start arriving in your mailbox – beautiful illustrated catalogs with every seed imaginable there for the ordering. After a long winter of garden deprivation, the gardener latches onto the catalogs with an intense hunger. Out come the graphs and yard diagrams. Plotting out next year's garden and making out seed orders becomes the primary focus of the day. At last all is readied and the orders are placed. The gardener now waits impatiently for the seeds to begin arriving. Remember the old adage about the eyes being bigger than the stomach? I think the same holds true for garden plans and reality.

It was easy to fall into the above trap. I plotted and schemed how to best use every inch of space in the garden. I figured out which seeds to start and when to start them. The year before, in a fit of unbridled enthusiasm, I started 24 tomato seeds in January. In May, I bought my plants from the nursery, my starts having long ago reached 24 inches in height with only two leaves and toppling over. I was not going to make that mistake again. I read the seed packets, checked the calendar and planted everything so it could go into the garden in the middle of May. I started 12 tomatoes, 4 acorn squash, 3 cucumbers and 6 zucchini. Everything came up and all went according to plan. At the proper time, I put all my starts into the garden.

This was my first year for zucchini. I had visions of stewed zucchini, zucchini casserole, baked zucchini, zucchini bread and cookies. When I transplanted the zucchini into the garden plot, the starts were so small they looked lost. I had high hopes for my zucchini.



I watered them faithfully and they rewarded me with growth.



Lots of growth.



Incredible growth – I had no idea the leaves were so big.



When the first blossoms bloomed and turned into zucchini I was thrilled. I was successful. The zucchini were fruiting. It was so exciting and impressive.

By the end of July the above picture was a typical harvest every few days. This batch of zucchini, cooked and shredded yielded to 14 bags of shredded zucchini (1 ½ cups in each bag) and 8 quarts of stewed zucchini in the freezer. More zucchini are on the vines. My neighbors no longer answer the bell when I ring. My friends hang up when I call. To my great relief, the zucchini vines became stressed and I grabbed the opportunity to rip them out. The harvest was at a welcome end before summer really started.



I relate this tale to warn others not to repeat my folly. Plant only one zucchini. In case you don't heed the warning, here's some zucchini recipes. You're going to need them.

Baked Zucchini

Wash and slice zucchini thinly. Cover the bottom of a casserole with layers of zucchini, then add alternate layers of sliced tomatoes, onions, and American cheese (other cheeses may be substituted). Green peppers are an optional addition. Top with seasoned croutons and bake for 1½ hours at 325 degrees.

Cooked Zucchini

Slice zucchini thinly and sauté in a skillet until crispy tender. Add a dash of lemon juice and ½ teaspoon oregano. Cover and cook until desired tenderness is reached.

Zucchini Cookies

- ½ cup margarine, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 cup grated zucchini
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon Baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 cup raisins

In a medium bowl, cream together the margarine and sugar until smooth. Beat in the egg and then stir in the zucchini. Combine the flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon; stir into the zucchini mixture. Mix in raisins. Cover dough and chill for at least 1 hour or overnight.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease cookie sheets. Drop dough by teaspoonfuls onto the prepared cookie sheet. Cookies should be about 2 inches apart

Bake for 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven until set. Allow cookies to cool slightly on the cookie sheets before removing to wire racks to cool completely.

Raisin Zucchini Bread

- 3 cups unsifted all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups coarsely grated zucchini
- 1/2 cup dark seedless raisins

- 2/3 cup vegetable oil
- 4 large eggs

Grease two 8 ½ x 4 ½ inch loaf pans or coat with nonstick vegetable cooking spray; set aside. In a large bowl, with fork, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Stir in zucchini and raisins until coated with flour mixture. In separate bowl, beat oil and eggs together; stir into flour mixture just until moistened. Spoon batter into greased pans. Bake at 350 degrees 50 minutes or until cake tester inserted in center comes out clean. Cool breads in pans on wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove from pans and cool completely on racks. Wrap breads tightly in plastic wrap after cool and let them stand overnight before slicing.

Zucchini Bread

- 1 cup grated zucchini
- 3 cups all-purpose flour (or 2 cups all-purpose and 1 cup whole-wheat flour)
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons grated lemon or orange peel (colored part only)
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup chopped nuts (optional)

Grease two 8-by-4 inch loaf pans. Wrap shredded zucchini in several thicknesses' of paper towels and carefully squeeze out moisture (it's best to do this over the sink). Set aside. In mixing bowl, blend flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and sugar. Add oil and beat at medium speed of mixer until mixture resembles coarse meal. Stir in zucchini and lemon or orange peel. Combine eggs and milk; add to zucchini mixture and mix well. Stir in nuts, if desired. Pour into prepared pan. Bake at 350 degrees, 45 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Zucchini Pineapple Bread

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 cups coarsely shredded zucchini
- 1 8 1/4 oz can crushed pineapple, well drained
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3/4teaspoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup finely chopped walnuts (4 oz)
- 1 cup raisins

Grease and flour two 9-by-5-inch loaf pans. Beat eggs. Add oil, sugar and vanilla and continue beating until mixture is thick. Stir in zucchini and pineapple. Combine flour, soda, salt, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, walnuts and raisins. Stir gently into zucchini mixture just until blended. Divide batter equally between loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees, 1 hour, or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pans about 10 minutes. Turn out on wire racks to cool thoroughly.

Zucchini casserole

- 4 medium zucchini
- 3/4 cup shredded carrots
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 8 tablespoons margarine or butter
- 2 1/4 cup stuffing mix
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1/2 can water

Slice and cook squash until tender. Drain. Saute carrots and onion in margarine until tender. Stir in 1 1/4 cup stuffing mix, soup, water, and sour cream. Add zucchini. Pour into 3 qt. casserole. Add remaining stuffing mix. Bake at 350 degrees 30 - 40 minutes.

Zucchini with Zip

- 1 tablespoon Olive oil
- 2 cups julienned carrot
- 4 cups julienned green zucchini
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 cup minced fresh mint
- Salt

Add the oil to a skillet or sauté over medium-high heat. Saute the carrot for 2 to 3 minutes, until almost tender. Add the zucchini and scallion and continue to sauté for 2 to 4 minutes longer. Grind in black pepper to taste and remove the pan from the heat. Add the lemon juice, mint, and salt to taste. Serve immediately.

Zucchini Christmas Relish

- 1/3 cup pickling salt
- 12 cups coarsely ground zucchini (about 12 medium)
- 2 green bell peppers, coarsely ground
- 2 red bell peppers, chopped
- 4 cups coarsely ground onions
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 3 cups cider vinegar or white vinegar
- 4 1/2 cups granulated sugar

In a large enamel or stainless steel pot, mix pickling salt with zucchini, peppers and onions. Let stand overnight. Drain and rinse with cold water.

Mix together spices, vinegar, and sugar. Add to vegetables and boil 20 minutes. Meanwhile, wash and sterilize canning jars and prepare lids as manufacturer directs.

Ladle hot relish into 1 hot jar at a time, leaving 1/4 inch head space. Wipe jar rim if needed and attach lid. Process in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes (15 minutes at 1,000 to 6,000 feet; 20 minutes above 6,000 feet). Makes about 9 pints.

Adapted from "The Zucchini Cookbook" by Paula Simmons

Resources

The School of Experience

Bitter Experience

Mother Nature