

## *What are Cymlings?*

by Phyllis Pugnetti

**F**or over a century cymlings reigned supreme as the most popular vegetable in colonial America. Even though you may never have heard of them, they aren't extinct. Today, cymlings are actually called Patty Pan or Scalloped summer squash and are native to the Americas. They got their name because they looked like cymling cake, a special treat that was eaten during lent. It was a single-layer round cake with little balls of almond paste arranged around the outer edge, and finished with a shiny white glaze. Eventually, patty pan cake pans with scalloped edges were invented which greatly reduced the labor and time required to make cymling cake. As patty pans became more common in American kitchens, people began to call both the cake and squash—patty pans.



The original recipe to cook cymlings was much the same as all vegetables during the 1700s. Cut into cubes, add water, and boil for three hours. Yes, *three hours!* This killed the bacteria and parasites in the water and on the vegetables that grew in barnyard manure. Obviously, this turned the squash to a slimy mush. Mashing the mushy cymlings together with lard, cream, or butter made a sauce. In colonial America most people ate game meat,

fish, or fowl, which are rather dry due to the low fat content. Smothering meat with a creamy cymling sauce was a perfect paring.

I actually tried this recipe and served it over chicken breast. It has a mild flavor and a very creamy texture and was surprisingly good. Needless to say, it didn't need 3 hours to cook. The sauce can be added to almost any soup or stew for added flavor. It can be stored in a freezer for several months. So, this summer when your squash grows a foot overnight, it's a good way to use some of those large fruits.

### *How to Grow*

Summer squash includes, cymlings, patty pan or scalloped, as well as zucchini, straightneck, crookneck, and round varieties. All squash should be planted in fertile soil when daytime temperatures consistently remain above 75°. Squash like plenty of water and organic mulch. You can get an early start by planting seeds in 4" pots about a month before transplanting into the garden. You should have large harvests during June and July. Summer squash varieties set far more fruits on healthy young plants that are growing vigorously, than older plants whose growth is slowing and starting to show signs of powdery mildew or pests. Usually it is best to pull the old plants out and plant new ones into the garden any time before the first of August. You can plan for this by planting more seeds in pots around mid-June so they are ready as soon as old plants come out of the garden. In the hot summer weather your second crop will grow like gang busters, providing you with a bumper crop right up until frost.

### *When to Harvest*

For the best summer squash, harvest when fruits are very small and blossoms are still attached, or up to 5 days after the blossom falls off the fruit. If you require very large harvests you may



want to look for varieties with larger fruit size rather than growing more plants. For example, when zucchini varieties like Costata Romanesco and Cocozelle are 12 inches long the blossoms are still attached, whereas Dark Green or Golden zucchini will be only about half that size. Bigger fruits usually means bigger harvests.

### ***How to Use***

With such a bountiful harvest of summer squash, be bold and try new recipes. Since produce from your garden is almost free, give yourself permission to toss anything that you don't like into the compost pile. There's so more to summer squash than grilled, sautéed, or baked. Try making pickles, relish, fritters, and patties. You've probably heard of zoodles—zucchini noodles that are gluten free. Lighten up potato and pasta dishes by adding or substituting summer squash. The internet has nearly unlimited recipes for casseroles, soup, and even faux guacamole made with green zucchini instead of avocados. Remember that squash is a fruit. You can substitute summer squash for apples in almost any recipe for crisp, cobbler, pie, bread, cake, and muffins. And finally, you might even try a taste from our ancestors—cymling sauce.

**For any gardening questions - you are always welcome to contact our Master Gardener Clinic at 509-574-1604 or email [gardener@co.yakima.wa.us](mailto:gardener@co.yakima.wa.us).**