



WATERCREST

SENIOR LIVING

From A to . . . Zucchini!

Zucchini is a summer squash. Other varieties of summer squash include yellow (straightneck) and crookneck squash.

The word “zucchini” derives from the Italian “zucca” meaning squash.

Ancestors of zucchini were native to today's Mexico and the northern parts of South America since more than 7,000 years ago. Brought to Europe and then cultivated, it is believed that Italian immigrants introduced zucchini to North America in the 1920's.

Botanically speaking, zucchini is a fruit; it has and is grown from seeds and grows on the flower of the plant (the blossoms are also edible!) In the culinary world, however, foods are often classified based on taste and not science; zucchini is treated as a vegetable.

Zucchini requires a temperate climate and a great number of bees for pollination. Since pesticides and mosquito sprays can kill bees, farmers may resort to hand pollination to avoid withered and dying fruit.

Filled with vitamins and nutrients including inflammation-fighting antioxidants, vitamins A and C, beta-carotene, and folate; zucchini is also a good source of water, fiber, folate, and potassium.

A versatile ingredient, zucchini can be prepared and eaten raw in salads or grilled, boiled, steamed, stuffed and baked, or fried.

Try it in other recipes including soufflé, bread (a nice alternative to banana bread), or even a cake!

A variety of ways that zucchini is enjoyed around the world:

- The Japanese make a tempura with flowers that are stuffed, battered and deep fried. Italians have a similar option – **Fiori di Zucca**.
- Mexicans incorporate it into soups or quesadilla filling.
- **Ratatouille** is a French dish that is made with zucchini and other summer fruits and vegetables, cooked in oil.
- **Courgette Farcie** is another French inspiration; zucchini is stuffed with tomatoes or bell peppers.
- Tired of plain pancakes? Turkey has **Mücver**, pancakes made from shredded zucchini, flour, and eggs, lightly fried in olive oil. They're popularly eaten with yogurt.
- In Bulgaria, fried zucchini served with a yogurt, garlic and dill dip, makes a flavorful snack.
- Egyptians prepare zucchini with tomato sauce, garlic, and onions.