



Using Local Food -- Zucchini

August 8 is known in some circles as “Sneak Some Zucchini onto Your Neighbor’s Porch Day.” Before you try to give (or sneak!) your zucchini away, here are some more ideas to use up this wonderful vegetable.

Zucchini is very low in calories (more than 95 percent water) and a good source of vitamin C, fiber, potassium and magnesium. The green skinned variety is a source of carotenoid pigment that helps protect against cataracts and macular degeneration. So, be sure to eat the tender skin on the zucchini!

When choosing zucchini, pick firm, slender squash that are free of soft spots or wrinkled skin. For best quality, choose those that are 6 to 8 inches long and not more than 2 inches in diameter. Larger zucchini are better suited to baking. Store them in the refrigerator and wash just before preparing.

Freeze zukes to extend the season. Wash and grate zucchini. Steam blanch (directions follow) in small quantities 1 to 2 minutes until translucent. Pack in measured amounts into containers, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Cool by placing the containers in cold water. Seal and freeze. If watery when thawed, discard the liquid before using the zucchini.

To steam blanch zucchini, use a pot with a tight lid and a basket that holds the food at least 3 inches above the bottom of the pot. Put an inch or two of water in the pot and bring the water to a boil. Put the vegetables in the basket in a single layer so that steam reaches all parts quickly. Cover the pot and keep heat high. Start counting steaming time as soon as the lid is on.

Source: National center for Home Food Preservation

RAW: ZUCCHINI BITES

Sprinkle zucchini slices with garlic powder OR combine garlic powder and Parmesan cheese.

The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm (NIFF) Coalition and the Food & Fitness Initiative are working together to create community environments that support access to fresh, locally grown, healthy, affordable food and safe environments for physical activity and play. More information about these programs can be found at www.niffcoalition.org.