

Cucumbers and Zucchini

Cucumbers and Zucchini squash are coming on strong this summer! To encourage good summer eating, we will demonstrate two ways to make pickled vegetables - quick pickled cucumbers and fermented vegetables. These techniques can be applied to many kinds of vegetables. For zucchini, there are countless recipes available steaming and stir frying with butter, salt and pepper, raw in a salad, deep fried in a tempura batter, roasted, frozen, as a refrigerator pickle with sweet onions, as a boat for savory fillings, sweet zucchini relish, juiced in a smoothie and, of course, zucchini bread or cakes or cookies, etc. I could go on and on. But you may not have considered making zucchini chips as a snack.

Storing zucchini and cucumbers:

The best way to store these vegetables is not in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator! A study from University of California, Davis determined that cucumbers and zucchini are sensitive to temperatures below 50F. They are prone to developing chilling injuries, including water-soaked areas, pitting and accelerated decay. **Store them at room temperature.** They should last a week or more on your counter. Keep them separate from bananas, tomatoes and melons which produce high quantities of ethylene gas. If you must chill them, limit to no more than 3 days and eat as soon as possible, keeping them towards the front of a shelf in the refrigerator where temperatures are warmer.

Cucumbers:

There are 2 basic types of cucumbers commonly found in public markets and some home gardens. Both are available from June through fall, depending on the weather. Ask your vendor when they have them available.

Table or slicing cucumbers: long dark green or round yellow lemon cucumbers or slender English or Persian cucumbers, Armenian cucumbers and Asian cucumbers. Fresh eating.

Pickling cucumbers: Boston Pickling or Kirby, gherkin types. These varieties are suitable for pickling, relishes, and other preserved foods. Do not try to pickle a slicing cucumber. Mush!

Fresh Cucumber salad: 6 servings

3 cups ¼ inch sliced cucumbers, quartered, if desired.
2 cups chopped tomatoes (about 1 large)
1 cup sliced sweet onion or red onion, chopped or in half rings
½ cup rice vinegar (or distilled white or wine vinegars)
Salt and black pepper, to taste
½ to 1 tsp sugar or sugar substitute to taste

Combine vinegar and sugar, Add cucumbers, tomatoes and onions. Season to taste. Mix well. Refrigerate, covered, at least 30 minutes before serving. Just as good next day.

Quick Kosher style garlic dill pickles: (6-7 pints or 3-4 quarts)

4# pickling cucumbers (4 inches long)
14 garlic cloves, peeled and cut in half or ½ tsp dried, minced garlic/pint
14 heads of fresh dill or 1 tsp dried dill seed/pint
28 peppercorns (4 each pint jar)
2 tsp hot red pepper flakes (optional)
Brine: 3 cups 5% vinegar (apple cider or white distilled only)
3 cups water
¼ cup pickling salt

Wash cucumbers. Cut a 1/16 inch slice off the blossom end, may leave ¼ inch stem on the other end. Pack cucumbers into pint or quart jars as whole, cut in half or quarter spears or ¼ inch chips. Add in each jar, 4 garlic halves or dried garlic, 2 heads of dill, fresh or seeds and 4 peppercorns. Add ¼ tsp of red pepper flakes per pint, if desired.

Heat salt, vinegar and water to a boil. Pour hot solution carefully over cucumbers within ½ inch of top. Adjust lids and rings. Tighten only finger tight. Process in boiling water bath. Pints, 10 minutes at less than 1000 ft. altitude. Quarts, 15 minutes. OR Only cucumber pickles may be processed safely at lower temperatures. See OSU Extension publication PNW 355 called "Pickling Vegetables" for specific instructions to avoid spoilage.

Fermented pickles: Per gallon capacity of container

- 4# pickling cucumbers (4 inch are ideal)
- 2 Tbsp dill seed or 4-5 heads of fresh dill weed
- 2 cloves garlic (more if you like)
- 2 dried red peppers (optional)
- 2 tsp mustard seed or mixed pickling spices (optional)
- Brine: ½ cup salt
- ¼ cup vinegar (5% only) apple cider or white distilled
- 8 cups water (use distilled water if domestic water is hard or chlorinated)

Wash cucumbers. Cut a 1/16 inch slice off blossom end, but may leave ¼ inch stem at the other end. Place half of the dill and flavorings in the bottom of a clean, suitable container. Add cucumbers, remaining dill and flavorings. Dissolve salt in vinegar and water and pour over cucumbers. Add suitable weight to keep cucumbers submerged in the brine. Cover the container. Store where temperature is 70-75 degrees for up to 3-4 weeks. Check the container several times a week and promptly remove surface scum or mold. Discard the batch if the pickles become soft or slimy or if they have a disagreeable odor. Fully fermented pickles may be stored in the original container for 4-6 months provided they are stored in the refrigerator and any surface scum or mold removed promptly.

Fermented pickles can be canned for longer storage. Pour the brine into a pan, heat slowly to a boil and simmer 5 minutes. Filter the brine through paper coffee filters to reduce cloudiness, if desired. Fill pint or quart jars with pickles and hot brine, leaving ½ inch headspace. Add lids and rings and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes for pints or 15 minutes for quarts for locations at less than 1000 feet altitude. Consult chart in PNW 355 or Ball Blue Book for higher elevations or for lower temperature pasteurization process.

Note: Temperatures of 55 – 65 degrees are acceptable but fermentation will take longer, 5-6 weeks. Pickles will become too soft at temperatures above 80 degrees F during fermentation.

Zucchini:

Green zucchinis or courgettes: Most common variety in stores and markets. Range in color from light green to dark green. Skins should be smooth and tender. No peeling necessary. Squash blossoms are a special treat if you can find them.

Yellow straight neck zucchini: More tender and less strong flavor than the light green or dark green varieties. Lends itself well julienned for stir-fry or raw in salads.

Zephyr Squash: Are yellow and green and mildest of the summer squashes. Tender and thin-skinned.

Round zucchinis are great for grilling as slices or hollowed out for stuffing with fillings for roasting.

Zucchini Cooking Tips

If your zucchini is overly large, it will have more water. Some chefs prefer to drain large zucchini of its water before proceeding with a recipe, much like as is done with eggplant. To drain, cut into slices and arrange them in a shallow dish. Sprinkle uniformly with coarse salt and let drain for 20 to 30 minutes. Strain under cold water, pat dry and proceed.

Due to its high water content, zucchini is best steamed or cooked as quickly as possible with a minimum of water added. [Ratatouille](#) is a signature dish made with zucchini, sweet peppers, [eggplant](#), and [tomatoes](#). Just remember, overcook zucchini and you end up with mush. There is no way to salvage it other than to make soup.

One pound will yield about 3 medium-sized zucchini or about 3 cups sliced or rough chop.

Most summer squashes are interchangeable in recipes, so if you cannot find zucchini, substitute yellow squash, patty pan squash, Zephyr summer squash, or chayote.

Zucchini is a good source of Vitamins A and C, and is low in calories making it an excellent choice for dieters. No need to peel or seed, and young zucchini can be eaten raw in salads. It's completely edible once the stem end is trimmed.

Sautéed Julienned Summer Vegetables (Zoodles) Four 1 cup servings

- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup red onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 oz. zucchini, cut into julienne strips (with a [mandolin](#))
- 8 oz. yellow squash, cut into julienne strips (with a [mandolin](#))
- 4 oz. (1 medium) carrot, cut into julienne strips (with a [mandolin](#))
- salt and fresh cracked pepper, to taste

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. When hot add the oil, onions and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 to 2 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high and add the remaining vegetables, season with salt and pepper to taste and cook about 1 minute. Give it a stir to mix everything around and cook another 1 to 2 minutes, or until the vegetables are cooked through yet firm. Adjust salt as needed and serve hot. *Source:* Skinnytaste.com

Dehydrated Zucchini chips:

Slice zucchini very thinly on a mandolin. Marinate ½ hour in vinegar. Spray dehydrator trays with cooking spray or lightly brush with vegetable oil to prevent sticking. Lay out slices evenly on tray and dehydrate until brittle, dry and crunchy. Before removing from tray, spray lightly with butter or olive oil cooking spray and sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Suggested toppings: taco seasoning, Chili and lime (Tepin'), parmesan cheese, dill weed, garlic salt.

Zucchini or cucumber pickle relish: Yield: 9 pints or 18 half pints

- 3 quarts of chopped cucumbers or small zucchini
- 3 cups chopped sweet green peppers
- 3 cups sweet red peppers
- 1 cup chopped onions, yellow or white
- 4 cups crushed ice
- 8 cups water
- Brine: 2 cups sugar
- 4 tsp each of mustard seed, turmeric, whole allspice and whole cloves
- 6 cups white vinegar (5%)

Chop vegetables and add cucumbers, peppers, onions, salt and ice to 8 cups water and let stand for 4 hours. Drain and cover vegetables with fresh ice water for another hour. Drain again. Combine spices place in a spice bag or cheesecloth bag. Add spice bag to mixture of sugar and vinegar and heat to boiling. Pour boiling brine over chopped vegetables. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours. Sterilize and heat jars. Heat vegetables and brine mixture to boiling and ladle relish into hot half-pint or pint jars. Adjust lids and process in boiling water bath for 10 minutes for locations under 1000 ft. altitude. Check PNW 355 or Ball Blue Book for other altitudes and for lower temperature pasteurization process.

Resources:

All handouts from these Market Fresh Demonstrations are available at Salem Saturday Market's website under the community tab on www.salemsaturdaymarket.com. These can be downloaded and printed as needed.

OSU Extension Service, Food Preservation <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation> Look for publication "Pickling Vegetables" PNW 355 for download or to request printed copy. Or visit the OSU extension service Master Food Preservers booth at the Salem Saturday market. Or go to the OSU Extension Marion County office at 1320 Capital, Ste 110, Salem, OR 97301.

<http://www.skinnytaste.com/sauteed-julienned-summer-vegetables/> Low-carb, low-calorie healthy recipes.

<http://homecooking.about.com/od/howtocookvegetables/a/zukecooktips.htm>

Note: These demonstrations are sponsored by the vendors at Salem Saturday Market for the benefit of our customers and the community to encourage good eating!