



# “Squash” your goals - make the most of this veggie MVP!

‘Tis the season - for squash! Maybe you’ve witnessed a zucchini coup in your neighbor’s garden, or a squash spectacle at the farmers’ market. Clearly this local favorite is one of the most affordable, abundant, and versatile veggies out there.

Not squash savvy? We’ve got you covered.

## Meet the Squash Squad

The summer squash family includes zucchini, yellow squash (straightneck and crookneck), pattypan, and zephyr (the yellow-green two-tone kind). Zucchini’s the most common, but each type has its own charm. Most have thin, edible skin and tender flesh that cooks quickly. They’re mild, slightly sweet, and ready to blend into whatever you’re making, whether savory or sweet.

## Fun Facts

- Zucchini is technically a fruit, not a vegetable (botanically speaking).
- The word “zucchini” comes from the Italian zucchini, meaning “little squash.”
- One zucchini plant can produce up to 10 pounds of squash in a season. (That’s a lot of muffins - see below!)
- The largest zucchini ever grown weighed over 65 pounds. Please don’t try this at home.
- Summer squash was cultivated by Indigenous peoples of the Americas long before European contact. What we now call zucchini was later developed in Italy in the 1800s.

## Why It’s Good for You

Summer squash is low in calories but high in benefits. You’ll get fiber, vitamin C, potassium, and antioxidants like lutein and zeaxanthin, which support eye health. Yellow varieties tend to be richer in carotenoids, while the skin of darker ones like zucchini packs more polyphenols—so eat the skin when you can.

## From Garden to Fridge

Growing your own? Pick your squash when they’re small to medium (6–8 inches long for zucchini). That’s when they’re most tender and flavorful. Bigger ones tend to be seedy and watery. At the market, look for firm squash with glossy skin, no soft spots, and a fresh-looking stem.

Just harvested or bought a bunch? Store unwashed squash in a paper or produce bag in the fridge crisper drawer. Use within 5–7 days for best texture. Clean with a soft brush and cold water.

## Common Pitfalls

- Overcooking: They cook fast! Sauté or grill just until tender, not mushy.
- Oversized garden squash: Still edible! Grate into muffins, soups, or fritters.
- Peeling: No need. Most of the nutrition (and flavor) is in the skin.

## Quick Ways to Use It

- Slice and grill with olive oil and herbs
- Add to stir-fries or pasta dishes
- Spiralize into zoodles
- Shred into fritters or veggie pancakes
- Roast with garlic and tomatoes
- Add to tacos or grain bowls
- Bake into muffins or quick breads
- Blend into soups for extra body

## Got kids?

Grated squash practically disappears into muffins, meatless balls, or even oatmeal bakes. Mild flavor = picky eater approved.

## Waste Less Tip

Got squash blossoms? They’re edible and delicious. Try stuffing them with herbed cashew cheese or adding to a summer salad.

# Super Healthy Chocolate Zucchini Muffins



These rich, moist muffins taste like dessert but sneak in a full cup and a half of shredded zucchini. Cocoa powder brings the chocolate flavor, while maple syrup and plant-based milk keep things light and dairy-free. No one will guess there's a vegetable in there—so please don't tell them. ;-)

## Ingredients:

- 1½ cups grated zucchini (no need to peel; squeeze out excess moisture well)
- 1½ cups whole wheat flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ cup maple syrup or agave
- ¼ cup neutral oil (like avocado or canola)
- ¼ cup plant-based milk
- 1 tbsp ground flaxseed + 2.5 tbsp water (mix and let sit for 5 min), or 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

## Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line or lightly grease a muffin tin.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon.
3. In another bowl, mix maple syrup, oil, milk, flax mixture, and vanilla. Stir in zucchini.
4. Add wet ingredients to dry and mix until just combined.
5. Scoop batter into muffin cups, filling about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way.
6. Bake 18–22 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.
7. Cool for 5 minutes in the pan, then transfer to a rack. Store covered for up to 3 days or freeze.

Note: Squeezing the zucchini well is key—if it's too wet, the muffins may be overly soft.