

Zucchini

GRADE
K-1

Month: September

Time Required: 30 minutes

Alternative Tastings: Tomato, Cucumber, Squash

Lesson Goals

- Students will increase their knowledge of fruits and vegetables.
- Students will learn to try new fruits and vegetables and increase their preference for them.
- Students will learn that their peers like to eat fruits and vegetables.
- Students will learn how to ask their parents/caregivers for the fruits and vegetables tasted in class.

Lesson Objectives

- Students will be able to distinguish summer and winter squash.
- Students will be able to identify the edible parts of summer squash.

Materials

- Whole zucchini
- Two varieties of summer squash (straightneck squash, patty pan)
- Two varieties of winter squash (butternut, acorn)
- Prepared bag of spiralized zucchini noodles (or demonstrate this during the lesson)
- Serving spoon or squeeze bottle for dressing
- Tongs for serving zucchini noodles
- Paper plates and forks

Preparation

- Wash zucchini, preparing to spiralize it as an in-class demonstration. Or, process zucchini with a spiralizer to make noodles ahead of time. Portion into food storage bags, one for each class.
- Select or make a dressing of your choice to serve with the zucchini noodles.

Recommended Books

“Pumpkin Circle: The story of a Garden” by George Levenson
 “Mrs. McNosh and the Great Big Squash” by Sarah Weeks
 “Vegetables! Life on a Produce Farm (Food From Farmers)” by Ruth Owen
 “Seeds! Seeds! Seeds!” by Nancy Wallace
 “Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!” by Candace Fleming
 “Zucchini Poem” by Robyn Reese

Standards Connection

This lesson supports the following Iowa Core standards.

Health Education

[Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8](#)

Science

Kindergarten - [K-LS1-1](#).
Patterns

First grade - [1-LS1-1](#).
LS1.A: Structure and function

Lesson Checklist

- Physical Activity
- Tasting
- Voting
- “Asking” Discussion
- Newsletters, Bingo cards, Stickers, Incentives
- Science connection: Plant patterns (K) & plant parts (1st)

Engage

1. Introduction: 2 minutes

The “Introduction” section is a time to introduce yourself, recap previous lessons, establish norms, or introduce the day's lesson.

If this is your first lesson of the year, introduce yourself to the class and to Pick A Better Snack. Share with students, *When I come to your classroom every month, we're going to have fun trying foods together and learn about each other. So here's something I want to learn about you...* (have students stand up in a circle)

2. Engage Activity: 6 minutes

The “Engage Activity” section has two purposes: 1) to activate students' prior knowledge and 2) to engage every student.

Act it Out!

Think in your head (can put fingers up to temples and close eyes), what is something you like to do in the summer? When I say our magic word “zucchini,” I want you to silently act out what you're thinking of. Ready? Zucchini! Observe all students' activities and ask a couple of students to share their activity with the class (use pick a stick to randomly select students to share). Repeat several times.

Option: Do another round of Act it Out, asking students to share something they like to do in the winter.

Explore

3. Experiential Learning: 10 minutes

This is a time for students to familiarize themselves with what you'll be tasting. The best way to do this is through a hands-on or exploratory activity.

Seat students in a large circle (opportunity for 3 deep breaths).

Summer is the season when we grow and eat summer squash. Today, we're going to taste a type of summer squash called a zucchini. What are we tasting today (choral response: “zucchini!”). Show a whole zucchini to the class. We are going to taste a fresh zucchini salad and sample it with a delicious dressing.

Summer + Winter Squash Exploration

There are other types of squash called winter squash. Winter squash also grows in the summer, but we can store it and eat it in the winter. We're going to observe some winter and summer squash and look for patterns in their similarities and differences. Split students into four smaller groups. Give two groups a variety of summer squash (ex: zucchini, straightneck squash, patty pan squash), and two groups a variety of winter squash (ex: butternut, acorn, delicata). Ask students to observe the squash using their senses. As a group, they will come up with three words to describe the squash. Classroom teacher should work with two small groups as the PABS educator works with the others. *Option: split the class into two small groups (rather than four) and the classroom teacher can work with one group.*

Explore (cont'd)

Once each group has come up with their three words, compare the words as a class. Consider writing the description words on the white board. Did some of the groups come up with similar words? Did some groups come up with different words? Discuss the difference in how the skin on the squash feels: soft (summer squash) versus hard (winter squash). *Summer squash has soft skin and winter squash has hard skin, so it can be stored and eaten in the winter when it can't grow outside. Think about the skin on your group's squash; do you think it was a summer or a winter squash?* Give students time to decide as a group, or lead a choral response, having all students share at one time. Then, clarify which groups have winter and summer squash and how you can tell the difference.

Food Preparation Demonstration:

I'm going to show you a cooking tool called a spiralizer that can turn our zucchini into noodles because of its soft skin. You can eat all parts of zucchini. Process one or more zucchini into noodles, enough for all students to sample. Point out the skin on the outside, seeds on the inside of the zucchini, and the stem where the zucchini connected to the plant.

4. Tasting Activity: 3 minutes

The "Tasting Activity" section is when students get to try the fruit or vegetable. Don't forget to review your food tasting norms (for example, "don't yuck my yum").

Before you pass out any zucchini, be sure to review your brave tasting rules (for example, don't yuck my yum, we all try together, etc.). As students receive their samples, ask them to use their senses to learn about the zucchini while they wait.

If possible, distribute a slice of zucchini along with the spiralized zucchini noodles. Discuss similarities and differences between the two.

Reflect

5. Voting Activity: 3 minutes

This is a time for students to give their opinion on what they tried!

As students taste the zucchini and dressing, have them vote with their thumbs. Observe their voting and offer positive reinforcement regarding the Brave Taster Rules. If a student dislikes the tasting, perhaps ask what they would change about it.

6. Reflection: 6 minutes

Reflection is one of the most important processes for students to process and retain new information or experiences. Give students an opportunity to reflect on what they've learned or tried in your lesson. This is an excellent place for students to practice the "Asking Discussion."

Reflect (cont'd)

Choral Response:

I'm going to ask a question and you're going to quietly think to yourself. When I say our magic word, "zucchini," you can say your answer aloud. Let's practice...

- *What month is it? (September)*
- *Whose class am I in?*
- *What vegetable did we try today? (Zucchini)*
- *Is zucchini a summer squash or a winter squash? (Summer Squash)*

Asking Discussion:

Raise your hand if you're excited to go home and tell your family about tasting zucchini.

- Ask a student with a raised hand: *if you wanted to try this at home, how might you ask your grown-ups?*
- You might also ask additional questions like, what else do you remember about zucchini? *Where could you buy zucchini?*

*Leave newsletters, incentives, stickers, and BINGO sheets with the teachers to pass out.

Additional Materials

Physical Activity

“[Stories in Motion: A Visit to the Vegetable Patch](#)” (page 59)

More ideas for physical activity are available at <https://idph.iowa.gov/inn/play-your-way/brain-breaks>.

What You Need to Know About Zucchini

- You can eat all parts of summer squash – skin, seeds, and flesh – raw or cooked.
- Zucchini is usually dark green in color.
- Choose zucchini that has smooth, shiny skin and feels heavy for its size. Ripe zucchini is firm and gives slightly to pressure.
- Zucchini can be stored for one week in the refrigerator in a plastic bag. Wash before using.
- Once zucchini has been cut up, it can last for three days in a sealed bag or container in the refrigerator.

Facts About Zucchini

- Zucchini is a warm season crop. It has a short growing season compared to melons and cucumbers. Once the fruit starts to grow, it can grow one inch per day.
- Zucchini is a summer squash. It is different from winter squash because it is harvested and eaten before it matures, so the rind is soft. It is the most common summer squash.
- Zucchini is best when picked small (about 6-8” long).
- Zucchini is considered a vegetable in our diet, but botanically it is the immature fruit of the plant.
- A zucchini plant has large, dark green leaves.
- Zucchini originated in Italy, but most squash varieties came to America from Europe.
- The Native Americans introduced squash as one of the “Three Sisters.” The three native plants used for agriculture were corn, beans and squash.

Health Connection

- Zucchini is a good source of Vitamin C. Reinforce by putting up your defense shield (cross arms out in front of chest). Zucchini helps to ward off germs and keep us healthy.

References and Resources

<https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/produce-item/zucchini-2/>

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide/zucchini>

https://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/documents/Summer/021712/ED_Zucchini_Newsletter_Final.pdf

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/gd_lesson1_0.pdf

<https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/2003/4-1-2003/squash.html>

<https://homeguides.sfgate.com/zucchini-plants-start-vine-56658.html>

<https://www.gardenguides.com/80661-train-zucchini-vine-trellis.html>

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. It was developed by the Iowa Department of Public Health in partnership with the Iowa Department of Human Services. September 2020

