



## FACT SHEET

### Zucchini Flowers

#### History

The zucchini belongs to the *Cucurbita* genus along with marrows, edible gourds, pumpkins and squash.

Through evidence found in human remains, scientists have determined that people have been eating vegetables from the *Cucurbitaceae* family since 7000-5500BC, which makes it one of the oldest vegetable families in existence.

During the 16th century, the zucchini was introduced to Spain and then later to Italy by the conquistadors. By the 19th century it was widely popular and had acquired its current name "zucchini" which is Italian for little squash. The zucchini is also referred to as courgette, which is derived from the original French term *courge d'Italie*.

#### Types

The zucchini bush produces two sorts of flower. The smaller flower with the immature vegetable attached is the female (left) and the flower attached to the long stalk is the male (right).



#### Preparation

The Italians were the first to prepare zucchini flowers and continue to do so in many wonderful ways today, however unlike in Australia, Italians prefer to use the male flower rather than the female.

Probably the most popular preparation of the zucchini flower is to stuff it with a soft cheese (like ricotta, mascarpone or fresh goats cheese) and then deep fry it in a light batter. The Greeks prefer to stuff the flowers with a rice mixture and then simmer the parcels in a little water for 20 minutes before serving with an egg and lemon sauce.

Flowers can also be tossed in a pasta sauce, steamed, blanched, baked or even wrapped in prosciutto and quickly cooked on the barbecue.

Because of their delicate nature, the zucchini flower needs minimum cooking time, but are certain to delight any food lover.

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