Using and Preserving the Summer's Squash

by Janet Hackert, Health and Nutrition Education Specialist

As summer winds down, summer squash becomes prevalent. There are many ways to use and preserve this delicious summer treat.

Summer squashes are harvested young when their skin is still tender and quite edible. There are many varieties in this category – yellow squash, crookneck and straightneck, patty pan, marrow and white scallop squashes, and of course, zucchini.

When the harvest is great or the price low, summer squashes can be frozen or dried. To freeze, choose young squash. Wash and water blanch 3 minutes. Cool promptly, drain, package, seal and freeze. If the squash is going to be used in a recipe, for example 2 cups grated zucchini for zucchini bread, it can be grated and frozen in containers marked for use with that recipe. To freeze grated, wash, grate without peeling, and steam blanch small quantities 1-2 minutes or until translucent. Drain well. Place in freezer containers and cool by putting the containers in cold water. Seal and freeze, marking containers with contents. For more information see MU Extension publication GH1503 Quality for Keeps: Freezing Vegetables.

Summer squashes can also be dehydrated. Wash, trim and cut into ¼ inch slices. Steam blanch for 2½ - 3 minutes or water blanch for ½ minute. Dehydrate for 10-12 hours or until leathery to brittle. To refresh dried squash, combine 1 cup dried squash with 1¾ cups water and soak for at least 1 hour. For more information see MU Extension publications GH1563 Quality for Keeps: How to Dry Foods at Home and GH1564 Quality for Keeps: How to Use Dried Foods.

There are many ways to use fresh summer squash as well. The Share Our Strength organization has several great recipes at their web site cookingmatters.org/recipes. These include the ingredients and materials needed, step by step instructions, nutrition facts information and chef’s notes with tips for saving time and for adjusting the recipes. Recipes include Bow Tie Pasta with Zucchini Sauce, Pasta with Roasted Vegetables, Ratatouille (a sort of baked vegetable stew), Vegetable Lasagna, Purple Vegetable Pancakes, and several others which can work well with adding summer squashes.

For more information on using and preserving summer’s squashes, or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434 or HackertJ@missouri.edu or your local University of Missouri Extension office.