

MARCH
2024



IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS IN OUR COMMUNITY

DATES TO REMEMBER

Ordering Options

In person with cash or cheque when you pick up your box:
Thursday, March 14th

In person with cash or cheque at Community Health Services, 2948 Dunmore Road SE, or Redcliff Public Library, until Thursday, April 4th

Online orders with credit card or PayPal until Thursday, April 4th

Next Pick-Up

Date

2nd Thursday of the month
2-6pm Thursday, April 11th

Food Talk Newsletter

The weather outside is warming up, and now is the time to be ordering and starting seeds for this gardening year. Due to our shorter growing season, many plants need to be started indoors in February or March in order to have produced a harvest by the first fall frost. Some common examples of plants that need early start times are tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and celery.

If you are a first-time gardener, you may choose to purchase your seed at any number of local garden nurseries or hardware stores. You may find though, with time and experience, that you become more particular about what you are growing, especially if you are working with limited space. Canadian seed houses are great options for finding that specific heritage variety you are looking for, or guaranteeing that you are choosing plants that will grow in our gardening zone.

You do not need a lot of fancy equipment to start your seeds. A sunny window and a few other supplies will get you started. Small containers, made from newspaper forms, toilet roll tubes, empty milk cartons, or disposable cups with drainage holes, can all be used to start seeds. You can also use peat or coconut coir plant pots which can be placed directly into your

garden when it comes time to plant outdoors. These are filled with a potting mix and set in a tray with sides for easy watering. You can purchase plastic trays specific to this purpose, but I've also seen people use old cookie sheets.

I prefer to water my seeds from the bottom by adding water to the tray until the soil is saturated. This prevents the seeds and tiny seedlings from being dislodged, which can happen easily when watering from above. Planting instructions and seed starting times are given on individual seed packets particular to that plant, so be sure to read them over when purchasing, to make sure you have ample time and space for growing them.

Seeds of Diversity has compiled a Canadian Seed Catalogue Index to help you find specific varieties of seeds from within Canada.
www.seeds.ca/diversity/seed-catalogue-index/

Watch for more information about our upcoming Seed Exchange in April!

- Alison Van Dyke
Food Security Coordinator

Phone: (403)502-6096

Email: communityfoodconnections@gmail.com

Website: www.foodconnections.ca

Facebook: 'Community Food Connections Association'

Twitter & Instagram: @CFCA_MH

Zucchini

Zucchini should be handled with care because it is easily damaged. When you are buying zucchini at the grocery store or in season at the farmers market, look for a moist stem end and a slightly prickly yet shiny skin as indicators of freshness. Ideally, zucchini should have firm skin free of cuts or bruises and at least one inch of stem still attached.

How to Store Zucchini: Zucchini will stay fresh for four or five days if you store it in a plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper drawer. Do not wash the zucchini until just before you are ready to use it. If you notice the zucchini wilting, you should use it immediately. Softness is a strong sign of deterioration. Cooked zucchini will stay good for up to two days in a covered container in the refrigerator.

If you've got more fresh zucchini than you can use in a few days, you can freeze it for later use. To freeze, slice the zucchini into rounds, blanch for two minutes, plunge into cold water, drain, and then seal it in airtight containers or freezer bags. In addition to rounds, it can be frozen in other formats, including shredded or cut into long zucchini noodles. Don't cut it too small or it will defrost into mush. Frozen zucchini will keep for 10 months to a year.

How to Use Zucchini: This vegetable shines when it's just breaded and fried or sauteed. Adding parmesan cheese to the breadcrumbs for breading or just sprinkling it on top after it's cooked turns up the taste quotient. But there are many other ways to use it. Zucchini bread is a way to make something sweet nutritious, and there are many variations on the recipe for it. Zucchini lasagna is a favorite of anyone who loves that essential Italian dish but wants to cut down on carbs. Or add zucchini and bell peppers to corn chowder for a healthy twist on that recipe.

Zucchini, Rice and Cheese Gratin - by Smitten Kitchen

Butter for dish
2 1/2 pounds zucchini
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/2 cup plain, uncooked white rice
1 medium onion, minced (about 1 cup)
5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
2 large cloves garlic, mashed or finely minced
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 cup milk, as needed, although water or broth of your choice would work just fine
2/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
Salt and pepper



Heat oven to 325 degrees F. Oil or butter a 2-quart baking dish, or 2 smaller 1-quart baking dishes.

Prepare zucchini: Wash zucchini and trim ends. Halve lengthwise, and if seeds are particularly large, core them out. Coarsely grate and place in a large bowl.

Prepare remaining ingredients: In a large frying pan, cook the onions slowly in 3 tablespoons oil for 8 to 10 minutes until tender and translucent. Raise heat slightly and stir several minutes until very lightly browned. Stir in garlic and cook another minute. Add uncooked rice and sauté for another two minutes. Season generously with salt and pepper.

Assemble gratin: Transfer to bowl with zucchini and stir together with 1/2 cup liquid of your choice and all but 2 tablespoons cheese. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed. Transfer to prepared baking dish.

Bake gratin: Cover tightly with foil and bake for 50 to 60 minutes, until rice within is cooked but not mush. Increase oven temperature to 450 degrees. Remove foil, drizzle top with remaining olive oil (or dot with butter), sprinkle on remaining cheese and bake uncovered until browned and crisp on top, about another 10 to 15 minutes. For extra color, you can run it under the broiler for one minute at the end.