**Did You Know**

- Zucchini is the most common variety of summer squash. Other varieties include: pattypan squash, crookneck squash, sunburst squash, yellow squash, chayote squash, and opo squash.
- Summer squash are harvested in the summer and have thin skins and soft flesh. Winter squash, on the other hand, are harvested later in the season and have thick rinds.
- While most squash varieties were brought from America to Europe, zucchini originated in Italy. Zucchini means "small squash" in Italian.
- Summer squash are members of the Cucurbitaceae (Cucurbit) family, which includes melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, and gourds.
- Summer squash are referred to as vegetables since they are commonly eaten this way, and due to their nutrient make-up, they are included in the vegetable food group. Botanically speaking, summer squash are the immature fruit of the plant.

**Storage**

Store summer squash in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to one week. Wash directly before using.

**Nutrition Information**

Summer squash are a good source of vitamin C and potassium, and contain manganese and vitamin B6. Vitamin C helps your body heal from cuts, scrapes and even broken bones! Manganese plays an essential role in such functions as the formation of bones and healthy skeletons.

**Cooking**

**Broil.** Set broiler to high, with the rack about six inches from heat. Cut squash in slices and drizzle with olive oil and low-sodium seasoning before placing on a baking sheet. Cook 3-5 minutes or until tender.

**Grate.** Add raw, grated squash to green salads, muffins, cookies, or use a spiral slicer to use instead of pasta noodles for added nutrients.

**Grill.** Pierce sliced squash with a skewer and place over a preheated (medium-high heat) grill. Cook 5-8 minutes or until tender. Pair squash with tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, peppers, or fruit.

**Microwave.** Place sliced squash in a microwave-safe dish with 2-3 tablespoons of water. Cover and microwave on high for 3-4 minutes or until tender.

**Preserve.** For more information on preserving summer squash, read the MontGuide Freezing Vegetables. Visit www.msuextension.org/nutrition and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension office to find the guide.
Raw. Rinse and dry squash to enjoy sliced in salads or
dipped in hummus or yogurt. For an easy no-cook salad,
toss sliced or diced squash with vinaigrette, place in refrig-
erator, allow to sit for at least four hours, and serve cold.

Sauté. Heat pan to high, add butter or oil to coat bottom
of pan and add sliced squash. Sauté until lightly brown,
about 3-5 minutes, or until tender. Remove from heat and
use as side dish or add to vegetable dishes, lasagna, pasta,
and other dishes.

Season. To enhance flavor, season with allspice, basil,
cumin, curry powder, dill, oregano, rosemary, sage,
tarragon, and thyme.

Steam. Place sliced or whole squash into steam basket.
Steam 6-10 minutes for sliced squash or 12-15 minutes for
whole squash.

Adapted from the Summer Squash Food Fact Sheet developed
by Montana State University Extension. For the full fact sheet
and other resources, visit: www.msuextension.org/nutrition.

Activities
Explore Summer Squash
Developed by: Erin Jackson, Gallatin Valley Farm to School

Montana Early Learning Standards
4.15-Scientific Thinking
2.5-Nutrition
3.5-Print Development/ Writing

Description
Compare different varieties of summer squash using
observations and descriptions. Discuss the differences
between different varieties of summer squash, including;
green zucchini, yellow zucchini, pattypan squash, yellow
squash. Taste summer squash.

Supplies
• 2 squash per small group of children. Use multiple
  varieties of summer squash, including: yellow crookneck,
  yellow straightneck, zucchini, patty pan/scallop.
• Paper bag(s)
• White board
• Student journal and pencil or crayons
• 1 butter knife per group

Directions
1. Place a summer squash in a paper bag, or a few
different varieties in different bags. Begin by passing
around the paper bag with a summer squash in it and
ask children to feel the item without looking. Once all
children have felt the item, ask the children to use
words to describe what they felt in the bag (e.g., bumpy,
smooth, round). Children may also predict what the
item is. Write children’s ideas on the whiteboard.

2. Ask a few children to share what they think the item
is and why, but do not confirm nor deny their guess.
Tell the children that you will now unveil the mystery
item(s). Slowly take the squash out of the bag and then
ask the children to raise their hand if they correctly
guessed. Were any of the descriptions correct? Were
any incorrect? Did they guess it would be green but
really it was yellow? Discuss varieties of squash.

3. Explain that this month’s Harvest of the Month crop is
summer squash. Ask the children to raise their hand if
they have ever tried summer squash. Ask the children
to share how they have eaten summer squash in a
breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a snack. Today they will all
have the opportunity to taste it!

4. Divide the children into small groups and pass out two
summer squash of different varieties to each group. Give
the children time to observe and compare the squash.
Next, ask the children to talk about their observations.
What is the same, and what is different?

5. Once the children have completed their observations
the teacher will cut the different squash into slices to
taste. As a class say “cheers to summer squash” and
then taste each variety. Ask the the children to describe
the taste and texture differences.

6. Once the children have completed the taste test,
compare and contrast observations and make general
comparisons between the varieties.

Anyone cutting and handling the squash that will be eaten
in the taste test should use proper hand washing procedures.
All produce should be washed thoroughly before cooking or
consumption.
**Recipes**

**Fresh Summer Squash Salad**
This no-cook recipe is perfect for using produce from the school garden.
*Developed by: Morgan Kelly, Montana Dietetic Intern*

**Servings**
6

**Ingredients**
- 5 small zucchini, rinsed, thinly sliced into half moons, can use any type or a variety of summer squash
- 7 radishes, rinsed, thinly sliced crosswise
- 3 carrots, rinsed, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 1/2 tsp chopped garlic
- 3 Tbsp lemon juice
- 3 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 1/2 Tbsp honey
- 1 1/2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

**Preparation**
1. Wash and prepare all vegetables.
2. In salad bowl, mix garlic, lemon juice, mustard, honey, vinegar, salt, and pepper.
3. Toss in chopped vegetables; stir until all vegetables are coated in dressing.
4. Allow to rest in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes, serve.

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**Baked Zucchini Chips**
Go beyond the zucchini bread--this is a fun way to eat summer squash!
*Source: Skinny Mom Blog*

**Servings**
6

**Ingredients**
- 3 small zucchini, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

**Preparation**
1. Preheat oven to 300°F. Lightly mist one baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Slice zucchini into 1/8–1/4–inch thick rounds. Toss zucchini with olive oil to coat evenly and spread zucchini on baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle on salt and pepper.
3. Bake zucchini rounds until browned and crisp, about 25 to 30 minutes, flipping each over halfway through.
4. Check the chips often as cooking times may vary. Rotate the chips around the baking sheet if needed.
5. Once crisp and browned, let cool and store at room temperature. Enjoy the same day for best crunch!
Montana Harvest of the Month: Summer Squash

Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between the Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.

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Extend the Fun

Source: HfHK_Winter_Squash_Activity_Plan.pdf

Word Play

Get children moving by adding physical movement to the book *Up, Down and Around*. When veggies grow "up," children reach arms high over head. When veggies grow "down" children reach down to the ground. When veggies grow around and around, children turn in circles.

MELS 4.6–Creative Movement and Dance

Discovery Table

Cut an assortment of summer squash in halves or quarters, and leave some whole. Place vegetables on the "discovery table," "sensory table," or another area of the classroom, so children can explore the feel, smell and looks of the vegetables.

MELS 2.3–Sensorimotor

Tasting Chart

Create a chart with children’s names on the left side in rows and the featured fruit and vegetable names on the top in columns. Each month, give children a stamp or sticker in the fruit/vegetable box next to their name if they tasted the fruit or vegetable anytime during the month. Hang the tasting chart in the classroom.

MELS 4.12–Data Analysis

Book Nook

Carlos and the Squash Plant, by Jan Stevens

The Giant Zucchini, by Catherine Siracusa

I Heard it from Alice Zucchini, by Juanita Havill

Up, Down, and Around, by Katherine Ayers

Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.