

Stuffed Zucchini With Tomatoes and Jack Cheese

4 medium zucchini (*about 8 ounces each*), washed
Table salt and ground black pepper
4 tablespoons olive oil
3 medium Red Bliss potatoes (*about 1 pound*), cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1 medium onion , *chopped fine*
5 large cloves garlic , *minced*
3 medium tomatoes (*about 1 1/4 pounds*), seeded and chopped
1/3 cup shredded fresh basil leaves
6 ounces Monterey Jack cheese , *shredded (about 1 1/2 cups)*
Balsamic vinegar to taste
Good-quality olive oil, to taste

1. Adjust one oven rack to upper-middle position and second oven rack to lowest position, then place a rimmed baking sheet on each rack and heat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Meanwhile, halve each zucchini lengthwise. With small spoon, scoop out seeds and most of flesh so that walls of zucchini are 1/4 inch thick (see illustration below). Season cut sides of zucchini with salt and pepper, and brush with 2 tablespoons oil; set zucchini halves cut-side down on hot baking sheet on lower rack.
3. Toss potatoes with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt, and pepper in small bowl and spread in single layer on hot baking sheet on upper rack. Roast zucchini until slightly softened and skins are wrinkled, about 10 minutes; roast potatoes until tender and lightly browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Using tongs, flip zucchini halves over on baking sheet and set aside.
4. Meanwhile, heat remaining tablespoon oil in 12-inch skillet over medium heat until shimmering but not smoking, about 2 minutes. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and beginning to brown, about 10 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high; stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and cooked potatoes; cook, stirring occasionally, until heated through, about 3 minutes. Off heat, stir in basil, 1/2 cup cheese, and balsamic vinegar, salt and pepper to taste.
5. Divide filling evenly among squash halves on baking sheet, spooning about 1/2 cup into each, and pack lightly; sprinkle with remaining cheese. Return baking sheet to oven, this time to upper rack, and bake zucchini until heated through and cheese is spotty brown, about 6 minutes. Serve immediately.

Stuffed Zucchini with Corn, Black Beans, and Chipotle Chiles

4 medium zucchini (*about 8 ounces each*), washed
Table salt and ground black pepper
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium Red Bliss potato (*about 5 ounces*), cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1 medium onion , *chopped fine*
1 cup corn kernels , (*fresh*) cut from 2 medium ears
5 large cloves garlic , *minced*
3 chipotle chiles en adobo , *minced (about 3 tablespoons)*
1 teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
2 medium tomatoes (*about 12 ounces*), seeded and chopped
1 can (16 ounces) black beans , *drained and rinsed (about 1 1/2 cups)*
1/3 cup fresh cilantro leaves *chopped*
6 ounces Monterey Jack cheese , *shredded (about 1 1/2 cups)*
lime juice to taste

1. Adjust one oven rack to upper-middle position and second oven rack to lowest position, then place a rimmed baking sheet on each rack and heat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Meanwhile, halve each zucchini lengthwise. With small spoon, scoop out seeds and most of flesh so that walls of zucchini are 1/4 inch thick. Season cut sides of zucchini with salt and pepper, and brush with 2

tablespoons oil; set zucchini halves cut-side down on hot baking sheet on lower rack.

3. Toss potatoes with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt, and pepper in small bowl and spread in single layer on hot baking sheet on upper rack. Roast zucchini until slightly softened and skins are wrinkled, about 10 minutes; roast potatoes until tender and lightly browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Using tongs, flip zucchini halves over on baking sheet and set aside.

4. Heat remaining tablespoon oil in 12-inch skillet over medium heat until shimmering but not smoking, about 2 minutes. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and beginning to brown, about 10 minutes.

5. Increase heat to medium-high; stir in corn and cook until almost tender, about 3 minutes. Add garlic, oregano, and chipotle chiles; cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes, black beans, and cooked potatoes; cook, stirring occasionally, until heated through, about 3 minutes. Off heat, stir in cilantro and 1/2 cup cheese and lime juice, salt and pepper to taste.

6. Divide filling evenly among squash halves on baking sheet, spooning about 1/2 cup into each, and pack lightly; sprinkle with remaining cheese. Return baking sheet to oven, this time to upper rack, and bake zucchini until heated through and cheese is spotty brown, about 6 minutes. Serve immediately.

Variation: Stuffed Bell Peppers

4 medium red bell peppers , *or yellow, or orange, (about 6 ounces each), 1/2 inch trimmed off tops, cores and seeds discarded*

1/2 cup long grain white rice

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large stockpot or Dutch oven over high heat. Add 1 tablespoon salt and bell peppers. Cook until peppers just begin to soften, about 3 minutes. Using slotted spoon, remove peppers from pot, drain off excess water, and place peppers cut-sides up on paper towels.

2. Prepare fillings as directed for stuffed zucchini, or invent your own filling.

3. Place peppers cut-side up in 9-inch square baking dish. Using soup spoon, divide filling evenly among peppers. Bake 8 minutes at 400 degrees.