

Zucchini Soup

The delicate flavor of zucchini, its versatility, quick growing season and price make it a fantastic year-round ingredient. I adore zucchini grilled, sautéed, fried, steamed and baked. Simply seasoned or extravagantly prepared, zucchini lends itself to all manner of preparation. I often use it in winter months as a filling for vegetable lasagna in place of creamed spinach and as a side dish with fish. In this soup, the onions and the zucchini are sautéed and slightly browned to bring out their depth of flavor, then puréed to the desired consistency. For the children, I add a handful of rice to the zucchini to make it richer and creamier. Serve hot or cold.

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, sliced
- 2 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- 4 pounds zucchini, diced
- 4 cups Chicken Stock, page 100
- Salt and fresh ground pepper
- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, chopped

In a large sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and sauté until soft and translucent. Add the red pepper flakes and stir. Add the chopped zucchini and stir. Add the chicken stock, raise the heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a blender and purée until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Chill in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Stir in the basil just before serving.

SERVES 8