

## **ZUCCHINI-LEMON SOUP**

*(The Cook and the Gardener)*

2-3 medium or 2 large zucchini (about 2 1/2 pounds)  
3 Tbsp. olive oil, plus more for sprinkling  
grated zest of one lemon  
1 clove garlic, sliced thin  
1 shallot lobe, sliced thin lengthwise (or use white onion or green onion)  
2 Tbsp. white wine  
coarse or kosher salt  
1 cup milk, plus more if needed  
2 Tbsp. heavy cream  
1/2 Tbsp. chopped wild thyme or regular French thyme (about 4 sprigs)

Peel and seed the zucchini: zucchini rarely needs much prepping, but for this dish you want a light-colored, smooth soup, so some work is required. Begin by cutting off the stem and flower ends close to the zucchini flesh. Then use a vegetable peeler to peel the skin from the zucchini. (If it bothers you to waste this, you may include it; or reserve it and saute the strips of skin in olive oil for another meal.) Cut the zucchini lengthwise in half, then in quarters. If the zucchini are older and the seeds are large, you will want to remove them by laying each quarter on its side and cutting along where the seeds and flesh meet. Discard the seeds. If the zucchini are very young, the seeds are usually insignificant and can remain a part of the soup. Now cut the quarters crosswise into even-sized cubes (about 1 inch).

In a large saute pan, warm the olive oil with half of the grated lemon zest, all of the zucchini, and the garlic, shallot, and white wine. Season lightly with salt, and lay a piece of parchment paper or a lid over the mixture to cover. Sweat over medium-low heat, stirring from time to time, for 20-30 minutes, until the zucchini is soft all the way through and there are just a few tablespoons of liquid remaining in the pan. You may have to do this in two batches if you do not have a very large pan. If so, omit the garlic and shallots from the second batch.

Puree in a food processor fitted with a steel blade or with an immersion blender directly in the pan (if it is deep enough), then pass through a sieve. Now you're probably asking, "Why did I have to bother removing the seeds if it's going through a sieve?" Because the seeds are just small enough to clog your sieve and make this step a slow, painful one. In a large saucepan, combine the puree with the milk, cream, and thyme. The soup should be light and creamy, so you may need to add more milk or water to attain the right consistency. (Water may be better, because you do not want the soup to taste milky.)

Heat through, adjust the seasoning, and ladle into four individual bowls. Serve warm or cool, drizzling with olive oil (or cream) and sprinkling some of the remaining grated lemon zest on top of each serving just before going to the table.

Serves 4.

Note: the author suggests doubling or tripling this recipe, omitting the cream and milk and freezing it in batches to thaw later, finishing it with milk and cream then. (What a good idea!!)