

Survive the summertime squash

NEWARK, Del. — What vegetable comes in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors and produces like mad? Squash, of course. Right now plants are cranking out this vegetable faster than most of us home gardeners can pick it—let alone eat it.

What we need is some help in using it up. Of course, you can always try giving away the excess to your neighbors. But after a few armloads of overripe zucchini, even they may throw up their hands in dismay, or try to hide when they see you coming.

Summertime squash glut is such a common phenomenon among home gardeners that two home economists with the Delaware Cooperative Extension Service have decided it's time to come to the rescue. Sussex county home economics agent Sally Foulke and New Castle county agent Debbie Amsden put their heads together recently and came up with a cracker-jack collection of in-

formation, recipes and tips on cooking and preserving squash.

"Squash is one of the most underrated but versatile of vegetables," says Foulke. "You can do a lot with it besides just steam and serve it with butter. And nutritionally it's got a lot going for it."

Squash contains a number of vitamins and minerals, but the nicest thing about it is its calorie content—only 30 per cup serving. It's also highly digestible. All of which helps explain why this is the fifth most popular vegetable in the U.S.

One thing anyone who's ever grown squash will agree on—it's very prolific. "It can easily overrun your garden, and if you try to keep up with the yield, it can even take over your life," says Foulke. Any gardener who's made the mistake of planting too many hills of zucchini will understand what she means.

There are two basic kinds of squash—summer and winter. Winter squashes like acorn, butternut and hubbard, remain on the vine until fully mature. They have a hard rind that makes them easy to store for several months if properly cured. So there's not the sense of urgency about using them up.

Tender-skinned summer types are picked while they're still immature and this explains the rush to keep up with them. They require refrigeration and are best used within 3 to 5 days, says Amsden, though some people say they'll keep until fall in a cool root cellar or basement. But this calls for a temperature around 55 degrees, plenty of humidity and good air circulation—conditions not easy to come by in the heat of the summer in most homes.

Varieties most responsible for

the annual summertime glut are the yellow crookneck and straightneck type, the saucer-shaped scallop and patty pan types, as well as zucchini and marrows. These last two come in a variety of colors—yellow, green, grey, black and striped.

Each kind of squash has its own subtle but distinctive flavor. Most go well with a variety of seasonings. Ms. Amsden suggests you try them with chopped fresh herbs such as thyme, parsley, basil or marjoram. Squash is also good with lemon, nutmeg, chili or currey powder, garlic, grated orange rind, tomato sauce, honey, chopped onion and grated cheese, she says.

Even the blossoms of this prolific plant can be eaten. Pick the male flowers—those without a tiny squash at their base. Open up each bloom and fill it with enough

stuffing to allow the petals to close again. The filling can be a mixture of bread crumbs, ground meat, grated cheese, egg or melted butter and seasonings. Place the filled blossoms side by side in a greased baking dish in a 350 degree oven until thoroughly heated or cooked through. The blossoms can also be sauteed in butter or oil, or dipped in a batter and fried.

The squash itself can be prepared in all sorts of ways including appetizers, salads, main dishes, soups, pickles, and desserts. Sally Foulke has been experimenting with ways to turn this bountiful vegetable into colorful, tasty, nutritious main dishes.

To try one of the recipes Foulke and Amsden are featuring in their collection, look for Sausage-stuffed patty pan in the Home on the Range section.

"Pretty girls" parade at Montgomery County Fair

GAITHERSBURG, Md. — Those with an eye for pretty girls are bound to find one that strikes their fancy at this year's Montgomery County Fair. Area 4-H'ers have been working hard to make sure their goats, cows and lambs are clipped, scrubbed and groomed to perfection.

The occasion is 4-H's annual Pretty Goat, Pretty Cow and Pretty Lamb contests. Exhibitors dress themselves and their animal according to a theme of their choosing. Prizes are awarded for the Most Original, Funniest and

Most Beautiful costumes.

The event tests the 4-H'ers' ingenuity and cleverness and great fun for fairgoers and 4-H'ers alike. The only dissent seems to come from the animals, and that's part of the challenge: how to get "Old Bess" into a dress.

The Pretty Lamb contest will be held on Tuesday, August 25 at 7:00 p.m. The Pretty Cow Contest will be held on Wednesday, August 26 at 12 noon, and the Pretty Goat Contest will be held on Wednesday, August 26 at 5:00 p.m.

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