

Make pineapple from zucchini? Now you can

LANCASTER — During the past year one of those consumer fads hit the whole United States. Make a crushed pineapple substitute from your excess zucchini squash. It started in Utah and moved east. Word of mouth spread the fame of the product. Soon came news stories about the danger of the product.

The Penn State Food scientists got hot on the trail of the problem, did some research of their own and what follows is the final word on the subject as of November 23, 1981. Keep this for future reference to answer all those questions that come up when you discuss with friends. Here's what the Penn State expert says on the subject:

According to Gerald Kuhn, professor of food science extension at Penn State, the safety of pineapple from zucchini depends on the recipe you used and how long you processed it in boiling water.

"At least four different versions of the recipe were making the rounds this summer," Kuhn says. In fact "pineapple from zucchini"

first surfaced in Utah and quickly made its way East.

Kuhn's lab tested one recipe — they thought the only one — in late summer and found that its high acidity made it a safe product for boiling water canning. That recipe originally called for packing the cooked mixture into jars and sealing.

Kuhn, based on his laboratory tests, recommended to consumers that this be followed by a full 15 minutes of processing in the boiling water canner. This final step is needed to destroy any airborne or empty container contaminants that can grow on the surface of the product.

A few weeks ago the "potentially hazardous when stored" reports from Michigan reached Kuhn. "We were puzzled," he says. But some detective work and several conversations with food scientists in other states and at the U.S. Department of Agriculture soon cleared up the mystery. The different lab results were caused by substantially different recipes.

"The Michigan recipe is a low

acid product," says Kuhn. "It calls for only one-half cup of lemon juice for 17 cups of zucchini, compared to the three-fourths cup lemon juice to eight cups of zucchini in the recipe we had originally tested. In essence, the Michigan recipe uses only one-third as much acid."

He stresses that only high acid foods are suitable for boiling water canning and adds that the low acid problem was made even worse by directions to cook the mixture three minutes and process in the canner only 10 minutes. "We had recommended a 20 minute cooking and a 15 minute processing — and that was with the high acid recipe," Kuhn says.

"Consumers should discard any 'pineapple from zucchini' product that was made with anything less than three and three-quarters cups of lemon and pineapple juice per half gallon of zucchini," he stresses.

If you used a recipe that did have the proper proportions of lemon and pineapple juice (which contribute the necessary acidity to the product) but did not process the

product in boiling water for 15 minutes, Kuhn advises you to check each jar:

Throw away those that show any evidence of swelling or mold growth. Remove the lids of jars that look all right, put on new lids and process in boiling water for 15 minutes.

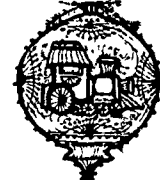
"Evidently," says Kuhn, "the pineapple-zucchini recipes first appeared through store promotions. They became so widespread that roadside vegetable stands were stacking jars of pineapple juice alongside bushel baskets of zucchini. There's no doubt that consumers are always on the lookout for ways to use zucchini, and this does make

an acceptable substitute for crushed pineapple," he adds.

"It is also a pretty good pineapple-flavored marmalade. We are convinced that the first recipe, with our modifications, is a safe product and can be prepared and enjoyed with confidence."

The complete — and correct — recipe for "pineapple from zucchini" follows: Peel and shred two quarts of zucchini squash, and one-half can (23 ounces) of unsweetened pineapple juice, three-fourths cup of lemon juice and one and one-half cups of sugar.

Bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Pour into jars, seal and process for 15 minutes in a boiling water canner. Use as a substitute for crushed-pineapple in cooking.



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