



COURGETTES

The courgette is the unripe fruit of the *Curcubita pepo* plant- It is harvested when still green and about 20 centimetres long, preventing it from growing and ripening into a squash.



Courgettes are the ideal food for low-calorie diets: indeed, their calorie content is very low, because they are made up of 90% water. Rich in mineral salts and vitamins A and C, they also contain folic acid and have detoxifying and laxative effects. By nature very delicate, courgettes do not last for long and tend to lose their freshness and original nutritional properties within a few days, especially if exposed to light and heat.

Producing quality courgettes in your own garden is really very simple. The plant can, to a certain extent, adapt to any kind of soil, even though it requires a high level of water. Many varieties of courgette exist, including the following: Striata d'Italia, long with easily visible stripes; Verdi di Milano, dark in colour and without stripes; Fiorentina, club-shaped with light stripes; Siciliana, light in colour; Genovese, or Trumpet, very thin and with large, swollen stalks; Tonda di Nizza, round in shape and light in colour; and Tonda di Piacenza, round and dark in colour. Courgettes are perfect served raw as an antipasto, but can also be grilled or cooked in oil, garlic and parsley as a great side dish. They work equally well in soups, pasta dishes and risotto.



Now it's time to discover the delicious recipes that our Chef Franco has prepared...

FARRO WITH COURGETTES AND TALEGGIO CHEESE



Ingredients (for 4): 300 g of pearled farro, 150 g of taleggio cheese (not aged), 300 g courgettes, 150 g of radishes, 2 tablespoons of black olives, 1 sprig of mint, extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.

Wash the radishes and slice them thinly. Wash and cut the courgettes lengthways into thin slices and then into short strips.

Remove the rind from the taleggio and dice it. Pull the mint leaves off the sprig, leaving them whole. Rinse the pearled farro and let it boil for 25 minutes in salted water; once drained, season it with a tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil to stop it from sticking. Leave it to cool before mixing together the courgettes, radishes, taleggio, olives sliced into circles and mint. Season with salt and pepper, add extra virgin olive oil and serve.

PENNE ALLA CRUDAIOLA

Ingredients (for 4): 400 g of penne, 1 clove of garlic, 150 g of button mushrooms, 150 g of small courgettes, 300 g of cherry tomatoes, 40 g of pine nuts, approx. 40 g of basil leaves, extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.

Wash and quarter the cherry tomatoes. Skin, wash and slice the new courgettes into small circles. Take the mushrooms, remove the earth from the base of their stalks and peel their heads (without removing them from the stalks). Cut them lengthways into thin slices. Toast the pine nuts in a pan on a low heat, tossing them until golden. Put all of the sliced ingredients into a bowl, then add the chopped garlic, ripped basil leaves, oil, salt, pepper and toasted pine nuts. Mix the ingredients well and allow them to rest so that the various flavours can blend. In the meantime, boil the penne until they are firm to the bite, drain and pour them into the bowl with the previously prepared mixture. Serve along with grated cheese – Parmesan, Grana, Pecorino or similar, or smoked, aged ricotta. Allow your guests to help themselves.



If you would like to personalise or vary penne alla crudiola, try adding oregano, mint leaves or thyme.

COURGETTE ROLLS WITH CURED HAM AND ROBIOLA

Ingredients (for 4): 40 g of cured ham, 100 g of robiola, 12 slices of courgette, 1 spoonful of chives, salt and pepper.



Peel the courgettes and divide them into twelve slices, each 2-3 mm thick, cutting lengthways. Salt them lightly and place them on a flat, slightly sloped surface for about 15 minutes so as to drain off some of their water.

Heat a grill pan and add the slices of courgette, grilling each side for 1-2 minutes.

Put the robiola, chives, pepper and finely chopped cured ham into a bowl. Blend and reduce to a cream. Let this rest in a cool place or in the fridge for at least 15 minutes.

When the courgettes have cooled, spread the previously prepared robiola mixture on top using a teaspoon or the rounded blade of a knife. Roll the courgettes up and place them on a plate, to be served garnished with chives.



