



The courgette

The ancestors of the courgette, wild marrows, seem to have originated in Central America ; their cultivation, which began 10,000 years ago, has since spread all over the American continent and also Europe after the discovery of the New World.

First cultivated for its seeds, the fruit has increased in body and flavour. Courgettes, which first saw the light of day in Italy, are Summer marrows picked before they reach maturity. They are from the cucurbitaceae family, like the pumpkin, and the skin is green or yellow.

Choice

Choose firm, intact courgettes with shiny skin, a sign of freshness, and without marks or splits. For preference, choose courgettes harvested young : at 15-20 cm long (medium size), they will be the most tender and flavoursome. The 'diamond', small, green and fine, is very flavoursome. The bigger they grow, the tougher their flesh becomes.

Consumption

They can be eaten raw as well as cooked (boiled in salt water, English style for example), steamed or sauted, hollowed out and stuffed. Cut into batons or rounds, they can be mixed into salads. They are an essential ingredient in ratatouille and very good as a gratin, alternated with garlic and gruyere in layers. French and Italians eat the flowers either stuffed or as beignets.

Conservation

Placed in a perforated bag they will keep for about a week. Courgettes can be frozen if sliced and blanched but the flesh goes soft when they are defrosted.



The male flower which can be eaten, opens out at the end of a long stem whereas the female flower develops the



Rich in potassium, it contains a lot of water. **15Kcal/100g**



PREPARATION

Handle courgettes carefully as they are easily damaged. To prepare, trim the ends and wipe them. Remember to remove the pistils from courgette flowers.



COOKING

Do not hesitate to degorge courgettes as they contain a high proportion of water. You can also place a layer of cooked rice under a stuffing which will absorb the juices. When possible, leave the skin on.



PRESENTATION

With their delicate flavour, courgette flowers scent and decorate crepes, omelettes, seafood or chicken very prettily.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS

- *Courgette flowers with goat cheese and tapenade*
- *Gambas with coconut and courgette 'caviar' with green apples*

Find these recipes on www.atelierdeschefs.com