**5 Ways to Incorporate Zucchini into the Keto Diet**

 When transitioning to the keto diet, fruit, vegetables, and low-carb substitutes become more important than ever. You might find the zucchini plant useful. Zucchinis are easy to eat alone or incorporate into lunch, dinner, or even snacks.

**All About the Zucchini**

 A zucchini (*Cucurbita pepo*) is a type of summer squash, a seasonal vegetable with high nutritional and medical values. Though it is botanically thought of as a fruit, it is widely cultivated as a vegetable for domestic consumption in many countries. There are yellow and light green colored varieties. Zucchini contains a lot of beneficial micronutrients such as:

* Minerals
* Carotenoids (Plant pigments that have been proven to provide protective health benefits, including reducing cancer risk)
* Vitamin C (58%, important for skin, bones, and connective tissue)
* Other antioxidants that help with anti-carcinogenic, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial activities. These benefits are why they were used in traditional folk medicine to treat colds and alleviate aches.

One scientific study showed that zucchini could have neuroprotective benefits, meaning that it can help with or result in protecting the nervous systems. Researchers administered a neurotoxic agent (a cause of brain damage) to sample groups of rats and gave some of the sample rat groups extract of a zucchini peel. The extract was proven to protect the brain tissue in the rats against brain injuries by restoring antioxidant enzyme activities. Since symptoms of brain damage include common problems such as issues with memory, reaction time, sleep, thinking, speech, depression, and fatigue, the health benefits of zucchini are certainly eye-opening. [[1](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4505008/), [2](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5537869/), [3](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25362619)]

**Substitute Carb Favorites with Zucchini**

Hopefully, you’re now convinced that you need to include zucchini into more of your foods. The quandary at hand is how to incorporate it successfully. The great thing about zucchini for keto dieters is that it can be mixed into meals, or even substituted for dishes like noodles and chips without sacrificing the crisp taste of carbs.

Read on to learn how zucchini can be a useful substitute for your favorite carbohydrate meals and munchies in the keto diet:

1. Zoodles

Zucchini noodles, or zoodles, are extremely popular right now. Pasta meals, while delicious, can be chock full of the unhealthy carbs that your body can store as fat, or cause irregular spikes in your blood sugar and energy levels. Then consider all of the possible additives like tomato sauce from a jar and cheese toppings, and it easily turns into a 1000+ calorie meal. The wonderful thing about zoodles is that they can be cooked extremely quickly and easily while retaining the al-dente taste of noodles. All you really need is zucchini, a stove, and your favorite toppings or seasonings.

To start, you can use a spiralizer (inexpensive and available at most grocery stores) or a basic peeler. Cut or peel the zucchini into zoodles. Throw a saucepan on the stove with a little olive oil over medium heat. Throw the zoodles on the pan and cook for 4-6 minutes, or until the zoodles have an al-dente or tender taste. Add some salt and pepper and/or your favorite pasta toppings, and you’re good to go! In addition to replacing any of your favorite pasta dishes, incorporate zoodles into casseroles and soups.

1. Zucchini chips.

Whether you’re on the keto diet or not, healthy eating often means avoiding chips. Yet it’s tough to beat chips as a snack, meal accompaniment, or party dish. Like zoodles, zucchini chips are also extremely easy to cook. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees and slice your zucchini into ¼ inch ‘chips’. Place your zucchini in a bowl and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil, and stir to coat. Add other seasonings like salt, breadcrumbs, and Parmesan cheese. Spread the now-coated zucchini onto a baking sheet and sprinkle more of your desired seasonings. Bake about 15 minutes until the zucchini is tender and the cheese is browned.

1. Zucchini bread.

Wait, isn’t bread inadvisable on the keto diet? Kind of, but there are plenty of low carb zucchini bread recipes on the Internet that keto followers can take advantage of, and you can’t even taste the zucchini in it. Zucchini bread can be replaced instead of your regular bread servings or snacks and looks like banana bread, but obviously with zucchini. You can make them out of coconut or almond flours. Grate your zucchini and set aside. Add baking powder or sodas to the desired flour mixed with eggs and a pinch of salt, and add butter or nuts as desired. Mix thoroughly and add the zucchini. Bake for 45-60 minutes and let cool for about ten minutes. For more precise directions, google “keto zucchini bread.”

1. Zucchini desserts.

Vegetables mixed into desserts may sound surprising (and unappetizing). However, like in the zucchini bread mentioned above, the advantage of using zucchini in baking your favorite desserts is that you can’t taste the zucchini at all. The zucchini, which already has a lot of water content, moistens the dessert and it that just-baked taste. Shred the zucchini into finely shredded pieces with a cheese grater, and add your favorite keto-friendly baking and brownie ingredients. Bake for 30 minutes or until the brownies puff up when they are gently touched. Let them cool completely for at least a half hour until you cut them into squares.

1. Zucchini Fries.

Regular fries are usually never good for you, but they are darn delicious. Zucchini fries are a great way to fulfill your craving for French fries. Like zoodles or zucchini chips, they can be made with very few ingredients that you already have. Unlike zoodles, they don’t require a spiralizer. Preheat your oven to 375 and cut 2 zucchinis in half lengthwise 4 times to make 8 long sticks. Then cut the sticks crosswise to make 16 sticks. In another bowl, mix a beaten egg and seasonings such as parmesan cheese, garlic powder, and black pepper. Dip each stick in the coating, put them on a baking sheet spaced-out so they aren’t touching, and bake for about 20-35 minutes until they are brown and crunchy.

 Zucchini on its own packs a healthy punch with disease-fighting antioxidants and Vitamin C. However, it can be a fantastic low carb substitute for those following the keto diet, and allow you to eat your favorite dishes without feeling guilty.

[[1](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4505008/)] Choi, In-Young and others. [“First Report on Fusarium Wilt of Zucchini Caused by Fusarium oxysporum, in Korea.”](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4505008/) NCBI.gov, June 30, 2015.

[[2](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5537869/)] Martinez-Valdivieso, Damian and others. [“Role of Zucchini and Its Distinctive Components in the Modulation of Degenerative Processes: Genotoxicity, Anti-Genotoxicity, Cytotoxicity, and Apoptopic Effects.”](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5537869/) NCBI.gov, July 14, 2017.

[[3](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25362619)] Zaib S and others. [“Protective effect of Cucurbita pepo fruit peel against CCI4 induced neurotoxicity in rat.”](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25362619) Nov 27, 2014.