

# Summer Vegetable Gratin



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## INGREDIENTS

- 6** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1** pound zucchini, ends trimmed and sliced crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices (see note)
- 1** pound summer squash (yellow), ends trimmed and sliced crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices (see note)
- 2** teaspoons table salt
- 1 ½** pounds ripe tomatoes (3 to 4 large), sliced ¼ inch thick
- 2** medium onions, halved lengthwise and sliced thin pole to pole (about 3 cups)
- ¾** teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2** medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 2 teaspoons)
- 1** tablespoon minced fresh thyme leaves

## INSTRUCTIONS

**SERVES 6-8 AS A SIDE OR 4 AS A LIGHT MAIN DISH**

*The success of this recipe depends on good-quality produce. Buy zucchini and summer squash of roughly the same diameter. While we like the visual contrast zucchini and summer squash bring to the dish, you can also use just one or the other. A similarly sized broiler-safe gratin dish can be substituted for the 13- by 9-inch baking dish. Serve the gratin alongside grilled fish or meat and accompanied by bread to soak up any flavorful juices.*

- 1.** Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Brush 13- by 9-inch baking dish with 1 tablespoon oil; set aside.
- 2.** Toss zucchini and summer squash slices with 1 teaspoon salt in large bowl; transfer to colander set over bowl. Let stand until zucchini and squash release at least 3 tablespoons of liquid, about 45 minutes. Arrange slices on triple layer paper towels; cover with another triple layer paper towels. Firmly press each slice to remove as much liquid as possible.
- 3.** Place tomato slices in single layer on double layer paper towels and sprinkle evenly with 1/2 teaspoon salt; let stand 30 minutes. Place second double layer paper towels on top of tomatoes and press firmly to dry tomatoes.
- 4.** Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering.

- 1** large slice white sandwich bread, torn into quarters
- 2** ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (about 1 cup)
- 2** medium shallots, minced (about ¼ cup)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil leaves

Add onions, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are softened and dark golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Set onions aside.

5. Combine garlic, 3 tablespoons oil, remaining 1/2 teaspoon pepper, and thyme in small bowl. In large bowl, toss zucchini and summer squash in half of oil mixture, then arrange in greased baking dish.

Arrange caramelized onions in even layer over

squash. Slightly overlap tomato slices in single layer on top of onions. Spoon remaining garlic-oil mixture evenly over tomatoes. Bake until vegetables are tender and tomatoes are starting to brown on edges, 40 to 45 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, process bread in food processor until finely ground, about 10 seconds. (You should have about 1 cup crumbs.) Combine bread crumbs, remaining tablespoon oil, Parmesan, and shallots in medium bowl. Remove baking dish from oven and increase heat to 450 degrees. Sprinkle bread-crumbs mixture evenly on top of tomatoes. Bake gratin until bubbling and cheese is lightly browned, 5 to 10 minutes. Sprinkle with basil and let sit at room temperature 10 minutes before serving.

## STEP-BY-STEP

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### *Assembling the Gratin*



- 1.** Toss salted zucchini and squash in half of garlic-thyme oil, then arrange in greased baking dish.



**2.** Spread caramelized onions in even layer on top of zucchini and squash.



**3.** Slightly overlap salted tomatoes in single layer on top of onions, then top with remaining garlic-thyme oil.



**4.** When vegetables are tender, sprinkle gratin with bread-crumb mixture, then bake until golden brown.

## RECIPE TESTING

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### *Keeping the Taste in Tomatoes*

Removing the seeds from tomatoes is a common practice intended to improve the texture of a finished dish. But how does that affect flavor?

### **Experiment**

We prepared two gratins, one made with intact tomatoes and another where the tomato seeds and jelly had been removed.

### **Results**

The gratin with the intact tomatoes had a decidedly richer, deeper flavor than its stripped-down counterpart.

### **Explanation**

According to a study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, that's because the seeds and jelly actually contain three times the amount of flavor-enhancing glutamic acid as the flesh. (This is the compound that supplies the savory quality known as umami in many foods.) So the next time a recipe calls for removing the seeds from tomatoes, you may want to ignore the instructions. You'll be saving time—and flavor.



**FULL OF FLAVOR**



**STRIPPED AWAY**