



## Melty Cheesy Zucchini Polenta Lasagna in a Mug+Incredibly Easy Italian Lemon Soda for One

By Erin Fletter

**Prep Time 20 / Cook Time 3 / Serves 1 - 1**

### Shopping List

- Parents: This meal plan requires a microwave and 2 microwave safe mugs. Also, please cut open the tube of polenta for your kid chefs prior to class so that they can easily peel off the plastic and slice it!
- Kid chefs will need a piece of paper and a writing utensil (pencil, pen, marker, etc.) for a possible game during class if there is time.
- FRESH
- 1/2 small zucchini
- 1 lemon
- DAIRY
- 1/4 C ricotta or cottage cheese **\*\*(see allergy subs below)\*\***
- 1/4 C shredded mozzarella cheese **\*\*(see allergy subs below)\*\***
- 1 T shredded or grated Parmesan cheese **\*\*(see allergy subs below)\*\***
- PANTRY
- tube-shaped (for slicing) precooked polenta **\*\*(see allergy subs below)\*\***
- 3 T marinara sauce (any pasta sauce will do!)
- 1 can sparkling water
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1 pinch garlic powder
- 2 tsp sugar

HAVE ON HAND

2 tsp water

## Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

**chop:** to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

**knife skills:** Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

**layer:** to arrange foods in layers, such as sliced fruit in a pie or tart, or sliced potatoes in a potato gratin; or to build flavors by adding seasonings or foods that may be dissimilar but complement the overall dish.

**microwave:** to heat or cook food or liquid quickly in a microwave oven, which uses high-frequency electromagnetic waves to generate heat in the food's water molecules.

**slice:** to cut into thin pieces using a sawing motion with your knife.

**dissolve:** to stir an ingredient, like sugar, into another ingredient, like water, until they become one substance; or to melt or liquefy a solid food, such as butter, chocolate, or sugar.

**juice:** to extract or squeeze out the juice of a fruit or vegetable, like a lemon, orange, or carrot, often cutting open or peeling the fruit or veggie first to access its flesh.

**measure:** to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

**microwave:** to heat or cook food or liquid quickly in a microwave oven, which uses high-frequency electromagnetic waves to generate heat in the food's water molecules.

## Equipment

Microwave

Microwave-safe mug

Potholder

Measuring spoons

Cutting board + kid-safe knife (a butter knife works great)

Citrus squeezer (optional)

Drinking glass

Liquid measuring cup

Small bowls for holding lasagna ingredients (4)

Metal spoon

Paper towel or dish towel

Soap for cleaning hands

## Ingredients

### Melty Cheesy Zucchini Polenta Lasagna in a Mug

1/4 tube-shaped (for slicing) precooked polenta **\*\***(for CORN ALLERGY sub wonton wrappers or zucchini strips—more info below)**\*\***

1/4 C ricotta or cottage cheese **\*\***(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 1/4 C silken tofu + 1 pinch of salt + 1 squeeze of lemon)**\*\***

1/4 C shredded mozzarella cheese **\*\***(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub Daiya brand mozzarella-style cheese shreds)**\*\***

3 T marinara sauce (any pasta sauce will do!)

1/2 small zucchini (need 1/2 C diced)

1 pinch nutmeg, optional

1 pinch garlic powder, optional

1 T shredded or grated Parmesan cheese **\*\***(Omit for DAIRY ALLERGY)**\*\***

### Incredibly Easy Italian Lemon Soda for One

2 tsp sugar

2 tsp water

1 lemon

1 can sparkling water

## Food Allergen Substitutions

### Melty Cheesy Zucchini Polenta Lasagna in a Mug

**Corn:** For polenta, substitute wonton wrappers or strips of zucchini (pat them down with a paper towel and cut to fit the mug). If using zucchini strips, skip the zucchini in the filling!

**Dairy:** For 1/4 C ricotta, substitute 1/4 C silken tofu + 1 pinch of salt + 1 squeeze of lemon. Substitute Daiya brand dairy-free mozzarella-style cheese shreds in Lasagna. Omit Parmesan cheese.

### Incredibly Easy Italian Lemon Soda for One

## Instructions

### Melty Cheesy Zucchini Polenta Lasagna in a Mug

#### chop + slice

Chop **1/2 zucchini** into bite sized bits. You will need about 1/2 cup total. Slice **1/4 polenta**, or 4 rounds, from the tube. Each slice should be around 1/2 thick.

#### allergy note

If kid chefs are using wonton wrappers instead of polenta, they will simply substitute 1 wrapper for each slice of polenta. If kid chefs are using zucchini strips, have them use a vegetable peeler to peel long strips and fold them inside of their mug before layering the other ingredients.

#### measure + assembly line

Measure **1/4 cup ricotta**, **1/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese**, **3 tablespoons marinara sauce**, and **1/2 cup chopped zucchini**, each into separate bowls, and set the bowls in line next to each other. Mix in to the ricotta **1 pinch of ground nutmeg** and **1 pinch of garlic powder**, if using.

#### spoon + layer

Start by spooning some marinara sauce in the bottom of your microwavable mug. Add a polenta round. Add a bit of chopped zucchini (skip the chopped zucchini if your kid chef is using zucchini strips instead of polenta). Add the ricotta and mozzarella. Repeat the layers: polenta, zucchini, ricotta, and mozzarella until you've filled your mug about 1/2 inch from the top, making the last layers shredded mozzarella cheese and a sprinkle of Parmesan.

#### cover + microwave

Cover the mug with a damp paper towel and microwave on high for 2 minutes. Let stand for 30 seconds and microwave on high for a final 30 seconds. Let cool slightly, carefully remove the mug with a potholder. "Mangiamo!" or "Let's eat" in Italian!

### Incredibly Easy Italian Lemon Soda for One

#### measure + stir + microwave + dissolve

Measure and combine **2 teaspoons water** and **2 teaspoons sugar** in a microwavable mug. Stir and microwave for 30 seconds. As the water heats, the sugar will dissolve. Carefully remove the mug with a potholder and stir again. Let the mixture cool.

#### fill + slice + juice + stir

Once the sugar water mixture cools, fill a drinking glass with ice. Slice **1 lemon** and squeeze the juice over the ice. Add the simple syrup (sugar water) and top the glass with **1 can of sparkling water**. Stir and say "Cheers" in Italian: "Salute" (Sah-LOO-teh)!

# Featured Ingredient: Zucchini!

Hi! I'm Zucchini!

"I'm very fond of summer, aren't you? After all, I'm a summer squash! I have beautiful, tender green skin, so don't peel it off before cooking, or you'll lose some of my fiber and nutrients. I may be a small gourd, but you wouldn't like my taste as much if I got too big. You can do all sorts of things with me to fit your recipes: slicing, dicing, grating, and even making spaghetti-like noodles out of me using a vegetable peeler or a fancy device called a spiralizer!"

## History

Zucchini (*Cucurbita pepo*) is a summer squash of the same family that includes cucumbers and melons. Summer squash is a squash that is picked when immature, while its peel is still tender. Like many other veggies we've seen, zucchini is technically a fruit, not a vegetable! Central and South American people have been eating zucchini for several thousand years. However, the zucchini we know today is an Italian variety of summer squash developed from those of native Central and South America.

Christopher Columbus brought squash seeds to the Mediterranean region and Africa.

The Native American word for zucchini is "skutasquash," which means "green thing eaten raw."

## Anatomy & Etymology

Zucchini grow on vines just like cucumbers do.

Zucchini plants produce male and female flowers on the same plant, with the female flowers directly attached to the fruit and the male flowers attached to a long stem on the plant. Therefore, insects must pollinate the plants for the fruit to grow.

Zucchini can rapidly grow to several feet long, but the smaller ones taste sweeter.

The record for the longest zucchini is 8 feet 3.3 inches. The heaviest zucchini was 64 pounds 8 ounces! It's "zucchini" in the US, Canada, and a few other countries. The word is a plural of the Italian "zucchini" (masculine form—the feminine form, "zucchini" is preferred), which is a diminutive (smaller version) of "zucca" or "gourd."

In France, they say "courgette" (koo-RETT), which the British also use. It's a diminutive of the French "courge," which also means "gourd."

## How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Harvesting zucchini when they're between 6 to 8 inches long and 3 to 4 inches in diameter ensures they

will be more tender and sweet.

A "bumper crop" of zucchini is an overload of zucchini that grows faster than a home gardener can cook and eat it!

When buying zucchini, choose firm and heavy ones for their size. In addition, fresh zucchini should have bright, glossy skin free of bruises or nicks. Zucchini stay fresh for up to a week when stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Zucchini is very versatile, and you can use them in both savory and sweet dishes, like ratatouille and zucchini bread.

Fresh zucchini blossoms can be cooked and eaten raw. You can remove the pistils from the female flower blossoms and the stamens from male flower blossoms, but you don't have to. Both have flavor and are edible.

## Nutrition

Potassium: helps reduce blood pressure and increase blood flow to and from our hearts.

Manganese: helps wounds heal and bones grow.

Antioxidants: help keep us healthy and healing faster when we're sick.

Fiber: helps us digest our food and absorb nutrients from our food.