



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Zucchini Boats

Kids can be some of the pickiest eaters. Getting them to eat their veggies can feel like climbing Mt. Everest, an impossible task. Many parents will try the *No, Thank You Bite*. When introducing new food or uncommon dishes, just try one bite and if they don't like it, say no thank you to the second bite. The *No, Thank You Bite* is a great way to introduce a variety of foods to your kids, or even to yourself. Some parents also try hiding veggies in other food like dicing up mushrooms and putting them in ground beef or spaghetti sauce to add more vitamin D into their diet.

These tactics are great when you're aiming for eight. Eight servings of fruits and vegetables each day can be done by having two at each meal and two for your snacks throughout the day. Spreading your servings of

fruits and vegetables throughout the day also helps you get a variety of colors from an assortment of food like the blue from blueberries in your breakfast oatmeal, the orange carrot for a snack, the green lettuce for your lunch salad, and the purple eggplant for dinner. Each color has a different nutrient profile and getting a variety helps you meet your optimal nutrition. Most vegetables are low in carbohydrates and high in fiber which helps you feel full longer, so they make a perfect snack to help you make it to the next meal.

This week try sneaking in another fruit or vegetable into a dish you were already planning on making. Top your salad with peaches. Add a can of diced tomatoes to a pasta dish. In your stir fry, add some baby corn. The more you try adding a fruit or vegetable to one of your staple dishes, the easier it'll be to get to eight without even planning for it. You may also find you'll receive more enjoyment from your meals.

A fun way to position more veggies in your children's eating pattern can be having them be part of the preparation process and presenting meals in a way they can relate, like a boat. These zucchini boats can be made in the kitchen or on the grill. Whichever way you make them, they're an easy meal to use to teach your kids how to cook. You can turn these zucchini boats into actual boats by using a toothpick to help turn a thin slice of zucchini into a sail. Add more sauce for the water.

**Ingredients:** 4 servings

- 4 medium-sized zucchinis, about 7-9 inches long
- 1 lb. ground turkey or chicken
- ½ cup finely chopped mushroom
- 1 ½ cup chunky spaghetti sauce
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp. of fresh basil, thinly sliced (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Trim the ends of each zucchini and discard. Cut each zucchini in half lengthwise. Scoop out the pulp in the middle but be sure to leave about ⅓ inch in the shell. Place the pulp on a plate lined with paper towels.
3. In a medium-sized skillet, begin browning the ground meat over medium-high heat.
4. Turn down the heat and add the mushrooms and cook for about 2 minutes. Add the sauce.
5. Using another paper towel, gently press down on the zucchini pulp to remove most of the excess water add the pulp to the ground meat mixture.
6. Let the mixture cook for an additional 1-2 minutes, uncovered, over medium heat. Stir often.
7. Place the zucchini halves on a baking sheet that has been lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray.
8. Scoop the meat mixture into each boat.
9. Bake uncovered for about 25 minutes. Evenly distribute the Parmesan cheese over the boats and cook for an addition 3-5 minutes.
10. Remove from the oven and let sit for 5 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with freshly chopped basil, if desired.
11. Serve two halves per plate and consider serving alongside a piece of garlic bread.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.