

Summer Vegetables With Ricotta

Summer vegetables with ricotta bring a freshness and lightness to meals during the hot months of the year. There are many ways to combine them to provide simple, interesting and healthy dishes. The important thing is to buy the freshest ricotta you can, preferably cut as a wedge from a large ricotta cake at a supermarket deli or cheese store. Italian specialist delicatessens will always have a fresh ricotta cake or little individual baskets of ricotta for sale. If you are using ricotta in a pasta dish the freshness will matter most but with a baked dish such as stuffed zucchini a supermarket tub of ricotta will be fine. A lovely combination is pasta tossed with ribbons of sautéed pale green Lebanese zucchini, fresh mint, lemon zest and finished with a very gentle crumbling through of ricotta. If you want to jazz it up, garnish with toasted pine nuts. This is a really lovely summer meal. The caponata recipe from my previous post is delicious spooned cold onto a layer of ricotta on toast. This combination is great for breakfast, lunch or a light dinner. Ricotta with slow roasted Roma tomatoes and fresh basil is another wonderful start to the day. One of my favorite ricotta-vegetable combinations is a variation on Corsican stuffed zucchini; the variation being the use of ricotta rather than the traditional Corsican goat or sheep soft whey cheese. These stuffed zucchini are very simple to make and delicate in flavour. They are best eaten at room temperature or cold, which makes them handy to serve as a snack with drinks or as part of buffet. Toscano's in Kew always have lovely little pale green zucchinis which are just perfect for this dish.

Fresh ricotta is available from Carlton, still the home of Italian foods:

[DOC Delicatessen](#), Carlton

[La Latteria](#), Carlton

[King and Godfree](#), Carlton

also

[Mediterranean Wholesalers](#), Brunswick

[Alba Cheese Factory](#), Tullamarine – go Sun- Fri mornings for still warm freshly made ricotta

[Alimentari](#), Collingwood

Corsican Style Stuffed Zucchini

- 8 pale green Lebanese zucchini
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- pinch salt
- olive oil
- handful currants
- 1 clove garlic finely minced
- 1 thick slice white bread, crust removed
- 200 g ricotta cheese
- handful finely chopped fresh mint
- handful pine nuts (optional)

Halve the zucchini lengthwise and blanch in boiling water for a minute. Drain and cool the zucchini. Using a teaspoon remove the flesh inside the zucchini, leaving most of the stem and enough of a rim at the rounded end to maintain a stable little boat for the filling. Chop the flesh finely. Heat the oil in a frypan and gently fry the shallots with the salt until translucent. Add the currants and garlic and heat gently until

the currents puff up. Blitz the bread into crumbs in a food processor. Add the onion mixture, half the pine nuts and mint to the breadcrumbs and mix for a few seconds. Add the ricotta and pulse until just mixed through. Using a teaspoon fill the zucchini and top each with a few of the remaining pine nuts. Place on a baking sheet, drizzle lightly with olive oil and bake for 30 minutes at 170°C.