

Ricotta Squash Blossoms – Comfort du Jour

Today, I can scratch off a dish that I only added to my bucket list as a “maybe someday” item—fried squash blossoms. I’d never dared even think about what was involved in making these lovely delicacies, but they were surprisingly simple (yes, *really*) and perfectly delicious. If you can pick a flower and if you can squeeze ricotta cheese from a corner-cut zip top bag, you can make these, too. Yes, it’s really that simple. Grab an apron and let’s get started.

INGREDIENTS

Handful of freshly picked squash blossoms* (see notes below)
3/4 cup whole milk ricotta cheese
Handful of fresh basil leaves*
1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
Sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 can chilled, unflavored seltzer water (or club soda or very mild beer)
1/2 cup canola oil for frying*

*NOTES

For this recipe, I used only male blossoms. It’s easy to identify them because they don’t show the beginnings of any tiny squash fruit. Once the female blossoms have been pollinated, the male flowers are basically just decoration.

Basil is one of those polarizing herbs. Some people swear it tastes like dish soap, and I’d hate for that to stop anyone from trying these special treats. Swap the basil out for thyme, parsley or oregano as you like.

Any neutral oil would be fine for frying these. Be sure it is an oil with a high smoke point, such as avocado, coconut or grapeseed oil.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the ricotta in a mesh strainer over a measuring cup to drain excess moisture. Give it about 20 minutes.
2. Carefully reach inside the squash blossoms and remove the stamen, which is a bulbous yellow thing inside. And may I suggest that you consider doing this step outside at the garden. I made a first-timer’s mistake of doing this at the kitchen sink and scared the bejeezus out of a pollinator bee inside a blossom.
3. Rinse the blossoms under cold running water, and gently shake them to empty out excess water. Lay them on a couple layers of paper towel to drain.
4. Rinse and blot dry the fresh basil leaves, then stack and chop them into small pieces. Mix the basil leaves into the strained ricotta, along with the parmesan cheese, salt and pepper. Spoon the ricotta mixture into a small zip top bag and seal it.

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5. Snip a small corner off one end of the zip top bag, and gently squeeze about two tablespoons of the ricotta mixture inside each blossom. The blossoms will “give” a little bit as you go, and it will feel obvious that you’ve filled them enough. Stretch the blossom petals around to fully cover the filling and twist the tops very gently to seal them up. They don’t have to be perfect, but the goal is to keep the filling from spilling out during frying. Rest the filled blossoms on a paper towel while you prepare the batter and frying oil.
6. Place a cast-iron skillet over medium heat and add the canola oil. This is not a lot of oil, so it will heat up fairly quickly. It should be about 1/2" deep in your skillet.
7. In a medium-size bowl, mix some salt and pepper into the flour, and stir in enough seltzer water to make a thin batter. It will bubble quite a bit, and that’s a good thing. It should be thinner than pancake batter, but not quite as thin as heavy cream. When I dipped the blossoms into the batter, they were coated, but I could still see them through the batter.
8. Very gently lay the blossoms into the hot oil and be careful not to crowd them or they will stick together. When the bottom side is lightly golden and crisp, turn them to cook the other side. Drain the fried blossoms on fresh paper towels, sprinkle immediately with sea salt and serve.

Note that I had some extra ricotta mixture after all the blossoms were filled. There was also a fair amount of tempura batter leftover, but I needed enough of it to easily coat all the blossoms.