

Pan-Fried Zucchini Flowers with Fresh Ricotta and Garden Herbs

makes 16 to 20 flowers or 4 servings.

For the batter

1 cup unbleached white flour
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
3/4 cup warm water
1 organic egg

For the stuffing

1 large organic egg – lightly beaten
1 cup ricotta cheese
1 shallot – finely chopped
3 tablespoons finely chopped garden herbs (Italian parsley, basil, oregano, thyme and sage)
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
freshly ground pepper to taste

16 large or 20 small fresh zucchini flowers
1/2 cup olive oil for pan-frying

Step 1: For the batter - mix flour, salt and water in a large bowl. Set aside and let stand for 1 hour. Just before dipping the flowers into the batter whisk in the egg.

Step 2: For the stuffing – mix the egg, ricotta, shallot, herbs, salt and pepper until well blended and set aside.

Step 3: To stuff the flowers – make a slit lengthwise in each flower and remove the stamen. Using a dessert spoon, place a small amount of the stuffing at the base of each flower and twist the petals so that the stuffing is held safely inside the flower. Place on a baking sheet.

Step 4: Heat a wide heavy bottom skillet to high heat. Add the oil and quickly dip each flower in the batter and add them to the pan. Sauté for 2 to 3 minutes until golden. Flip the flowers and continue to sauté for 1 to 2 minutes until golden. repeat until all flowers have been used, reducing the heat to medium-high when the pan is very hot so the oil doesn't burn. Alternatively, use 2 pans.

Step 5: To serve, overlap 4 to 6 flowers in the center of each plate and serve immediately.

Cook's note: you must serve the flowers piping hot, as they become soggy as they cool.