

Zucchini Lemon Poppy Seed Bread - Makes two loaves

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 ½ cups sugar
2/3 cup oil or applesauce (see note)
3 eggs
½ teaspoon lemon extract
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest (fresh or freeze-dried)
2 tablespoons poppy seeds
2 cups grated zucchini (fresh or freeze-dried, see note if using freeze-dried)
3 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon soda
¼ teaspoon baking powder
Powdered sugar for dusting or lemon glaze (see note)

Directions:

1. Start by preheating your oven to 325°F and greasing two loaf pans.
2. In a large bowl, cream together 8 oz. of softened cream cheese, 1 ½ cups of sugar, and 2/3 cup of oil or applesauce.
3. Once the mixture is creamy, add 3 eggs, ½ teaspoon of lemon extract, 1 teaspoon of vanilla, 1 teaspoon of grated lemon zest, and 2 tablespoons of poppy seeds. Mix thoroughly.
4. Next, fold in 2 cups of grated zucchini until well incorporated into the mixture.
5. In a separate bowl, combine 3 cups of flour, 1 teaspoon of salt, 1 teaspoon of soda, and ¼ teaspoon of baking powder.
6. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, mixing just until everything is blended.
7. Divide the batter between the two prepared loaf pans.
8. Bake for 45-60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
9. Once baked, if desired, dust the bread with powdered sugar or drizzle with a lemon glaze (see note) for extra flavor and sweetness.

Notes:

Fresh or freeze-dried lemon zest: Use as is. No need to rehydrate first.

Homemade Applesauce: You can use this instead of oil in the recipe. This not only adds flavor but also reduces the fat content of your bread.

Fresh or Freeze-dried Zucchini: Fresh zucchini can be grated directly into the batter. If you're using freeze-dried zucchini, rehydrate it first by soaking it in water.

To make lemon glaze: Combine 1 cup powdered sugar with 2 to 3 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice and drizzle over warm bread.