



8/12/93

Dear Harold & Hel,

I enclose
a clipping from yesterday's
New York Times I thought you
might find of interest.

I also enclosed a copy of a
clip from a local paper reporting
on a prize Fredal won for his
Zucchini bread. Love

Bob & Frieda

Putnam Courier - Times Aug 5 1993

Zucchini: from bane to blessing as bread

By Frieda H. Rabkin
CONTRIBUTOR

CARMEL — Yesterday I walked past our vegetable patch (about the size of three tennis courts) on my way to the compost pile and my heart overflowed with joy upon seeing the zucchinis' yellow flowers, a sight that five years ago or so would have made my heart sink. Then I was a zucchini pariah.

My husband, whose green thumb is legendary, produced each summer such a surfeit of the vegetable that I was at my wit's end to dispose of it. Plow it under was not in the vocabulary of a city child who never saw or heard of a daffodil until his English teacher in high school read the poem to the class.

With a copy of Wordsworth's poem in hand, he betook himself to the Bronx Botanical Gardens and had the flower pointed out to him. Need I say that now, many years later, we have almost as many daffodils as the Bronx garden. But I better get back to the zucchini.

Upon me, loyal wife, fell the task of distributing the zucchini surplus. Before long every August, colleagues at work began to avoid me. They were afraid I was going to dump another zucchini on them. Neither Scope nor Listerine could have made me popular during our zucchini-growing season.

Suddenly it all changed! In

desperation I'd discovered a recipe for zucchini bread, or cake, which it really is. My food processor and I became close friends and, when I learned that the baked product could be frozen, I could once more make friends and influence people without the specter of zucchini haunting all my relationships. People no longer may have cried for Castoria (you are probably too young to remember those ads, but ask your mother and grandmother about them) but they wanted my zucchini bread!

Its fame spread as far away as the outreaches of Parma, Italy where, ever since my daughter had spend a Fulbright year there and had known the glorious hospitality of the Italians, we have hosted visitors and students from that country.

One young man, now a visiting professor at a New York hospital, loves my zucchini bread and told his family and friends there of the delicacy. Last year while I was attending his wedding in Parma, my hostess, whose fame as a baker and cook is celebrated through Emilia Romagna, persuaded me to bake the bread in her house so that she could see how it was made and repeat the process after I was gone, since her son, too, liked the bread.

I was trapped into performing. In a strange kitchen, with an oven with centigrade markings (I am not particularly adept at conversion from

one table to the other), I was not too sure of the temperature at which I was baking. My rather impoverished Italian vocabulary did not include the Italian for baking soda and baking powder.

I struggled on with my hostess and her housekeeper, no mean cook herself, cheering me on. While the cake was in the oven, I walked up and down and around the house, much like an expectant father. At last the product was taken from the oven. It cooled and was tasted. The verdict was highly favorable. My reputation was intact.

I have lost track of how many zucchini breads I have made. They have become a staple of the annual lobbying trip I make every year with the library with which I am associated as a volunteer. My fellow lobbyists assure me the bread provides the strength they need to urge our legislators to provide more financial support for libraries, statewide. I hope so.

Now, in the middle of our dry summer 1993, our squash crop is no longer about to yield a surplus. I had to buy zucchini for the bread I submitted as an entry in the food section of the Putnam County 4-H Fair.

P.S. I just came home with a blue ribbon "Excellent" for my zucchini bread.

Frieda H. Rabkin is a Carmel resident.
