

# A Recipe for Success

For besieged family, too many zucchinis became a blessing in disguise.

BY THERESA NELSON • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

“Oh, no—not another one!” Mom wailed as I brought in yet one more zucchini, this time from our neighbor, Mr. Gardner.

“What are we going to do with it?” she asked as she slumped into a chair. “Summer isn’t even over and I’m already tired of zucchini. Just look at all of them,” she added, gesturing toward the kitchen, where zucchinis covered a counter.

We received zucchinis from just about everyone imaginable, from my Dad’s boss to the postman to a lady from church to our friend Mrs. Zillar. I was only 6 years old that summer of 1970, but I’d already learned one thing: Many people grew zucchini, but few liked to eat them.

“What can we do with all these zucchinis?” Mom asked.

I shrugged my shoulders. “Just leave them on the counter for decoration,” I suggested. I’d only eaten zucchini a few times and wasn’t eager for more.

Then the phone rang. It was a lady from church, asking if Mom could make something for a bake sale. She agreed to help, then sighed as she hung up.

Eyeing the mound of green on the counter, I threw out an idea. “Maybe we could bake something that uses zucchini.”

“I don’t know,” Mom said hesitantly.

“It would be a good way to get rid of them.”

“You’re right,” she said, her mood instantly brightening. “Go get my cookbook.”

She opened to the index and ran her finger down a list of zucchini-based recipes: zucchini bread, zucchini cookies, zucchini muffins and zucchini bars. Then she hit the jackpot: chocolate zucchini cake.

“That’s it!” I shouted. “People will eat it because they won’t see any zucchini in it.”

During the next several days, I helped Mom make 18 chocolate zucchini cakes, which we slathered

with chocolate frosting. When we finished, our kitchen counter didn’t show a hint of green.

When we dropped off the cakes, one lady asked us what kind they were. I looked at my mother, and she looked at me.

“They’re chocolate surprise cakes,” Mom finally answered.

“Wonderful!” the lady said, beaming.

As it turned out, all of Mom’s cakes were sold. The next day we ran into Mrs. Zillar, who had bought one of them. She complimented Mom on her baking, then asked her why it was called surprise cake.

“It has a secret ingredient,” I said. Then Mom and I smiled at each other, knowing that future bumper crops of zucchini would never again pose a problem.



**BAKING BUDDIES** Theresa and her mom, Barbara, team up for a family photo in 1976 (above) and in 2006 (right).