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The Antidote to Summer Mom Guilt

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This time of year I let a lot slide with my parenting but there's one thing I can count on to make me feel like the most awesome mom on the planet (or at least in my house). Hint: It's green.

In the summertime, my kids stay up too late, they don't bathe enough (at least not with soap), they brush their teeth and hair less and eat more hotdogs and ice cream than I'm comfortable with. I love that I am able to go with the unflow a little more than normal, and let my kids chill out, but I'd be lying if I said there weren't days that I felt a little...less than. But there's one thing my kids do in the summer that immediately boosts my "good mom" vibes and eclipses some of the chaos: Vegetables. My kids not only eat veggies, they eat veggies that we grow ourselves in the garden in our backyard. And nothing makes me happier.

My friend, Elizabeth, installed a big garden bed in my backyard last year and taught me how to seed it, harvest it and generally care for it (I knew nothing about growing food). She runs a small business called [Earl's Kitchen Gardens](#) (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Earls-Kitchen-Gardens/150548691683046>) and she prides herself on creating these edible wonderlands for families like mine. And mine is obsessed. The garden provides food, fun, education, activity, beauty, pride, and—bonus—it saves us money. For a solid six weeks I didn't have to buy a single one of those overpriced plastic boxes of organic greens from the grocery store because I had my own continuous supply in my garden. Yes, I have officially drank the (organic, composted) Kool-Aid. But I'm not overstating it. Vegetable gardens rock.



Do you believe the size of these?

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I get this many about every other day. Not exaggerating.



These were so flavorful and so fresh!

Right now, we are growing tomatoes, cucumbers, green beans, yellow beans, beets, kale, tons of lettuces, greens, zucchini, jalapeno peppers, eggplant and bell peppers. Plus tons of herbs in the garden and in pots. Not all of it is ready to be eaten but so far we've gone through a huge crop of amazingly delicious greens and lettuces (one called drunken frizzy-haired redhead or something like that, which felt appropriate), snap peas, which the kids loved so much raw we never got to cook any, an insane abundance of green beans (I'm talking,

we have them every single night) and most recently, we're having a big zucchini moment. And by big I mean baseball-bat sized. Anyone who's ever grown zucchini can tell you, one day they look a little too small to be picked and then next day, they're on steroids. It's insane. And they are insanely delicious. Here are two of my favorite ways to prepare them:



Fritters! Insanely delicious. And the kids devour them.



Grilled zucchini ribbons tossed in lemon vinaigrette with toasted pine nuts, mint and parsley (also from garden) and shaves of parm. Beyond.

We've had the perfect mix of sun and rain this summer so our garden is thriving. But the best part is the way my kids adore it. And the way a simple side from our garden can assuage mom guilt. Even if my kids are eating a slice of pizza from up the street, I'll throw a few of our green beans in a frying pan with some olive oil, kosher salt and pepper. To. Die. For. And they love them. There is nothing better to me than planting veggies with my kids, watering the plants, checking on them, watching them grow, then picking them, cooking them, and watching my kids gobble them up. It literally makes up for every F-word Nora drops and every "he's a little handsy" comment I get from Alex's camp counselors. Yeah, my kids aren't perfect and I'm not either but they know the difference between a cucumber and a zucchini and they eat them both. And that counts for a lot in my book.

Do you have a garden? Do you love it as much as I do? How do you get your kids involved? Got any great ideas for zucchini? I have a ton and can use some new recipes. Happy weekend!!!

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