

DEEP-FRIED COURGETTE FLOWERS 21 STUFFED WITH RICOTTA

Fiori di zucchine fritti e ripieni di ricotta



SERVES 6

12 courgette flowers
250g ricotta cheese
25g Grana Padano
cheese, finely grated
Grated zest of ½
unwaxed lemon
About 1 litre of
sunflower oil for
deep-frying
Sea salt flakes and
freshly ground
black pepper

For the batter

300g plain flour
1 x 7g sachet fast-
action (easy blend)
yeast
Pinch of salt
1 egg yolk
500ml Italian beer
(lager)

Courgette flowers, sold in bunches in Italian markets in midsummer, are usually a privilege reserved for the kitchen gardener in Britain. They're a rare treat in the shops, so if you see courgette flowers for sale snap them up and cook them the same day – they don't last long. For variety, add some fresh mint to the ricotta mixture or pop in a small cube of mozzarella.

1. First make the batter. Place the flour in a large bowl with the yeast and salt. Make a well in the centre and add the egg yolk. Pour in the beer, a little at a time, whisking until the flour is completely blended and the mixture is smooth. Cover with cling film and leave to rest for 1½ hours at room temperature.
2. Meanwhile, using your fingers, gently part the courgette flower petals and remove and discard the stamens. Set the flowers aside.
3. To make the filling, put the ricotta, Grana Padano and lemon zest in a medium bowl. Stir to combine and season with salt and pepper. Carefully stuff each flower with about 1 tablespoon of the cheese mixture. Be careful not to over-fill. To seal, bring the petals together to enclose the mixture and twist the ends slightly.
4. Heat a deep-fat fryer to 180°C, or heat the oil in a deep pan or a wok until very hot. To test the temperature, drop a teaspoon of the batter into the oil; it will sizzle when the oil is hot enough for frying.
5. Dip each stuffed courgette flower into the batter and transfer to the hot oil to deep-fry for 2–3 minutes or until golden brown and crispy. You will need to fry in batches of 2 at a time so they are not touching. Carefully remove the flowers with tongs or a slotted spoon and drain on kitchen paper. Sprinkle over some sea salt flakes and a few grindings of pepper and serve immediately.