Cleo Coyle's "Italian Fried" Zucchini

Text and photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi
who writes The Coffeehouse Mysteries as
Cleo Coyle with her husband, Marc Cerasini.

Italian cooks call this incredibly easy frying method "dorati e fritti" or "golden and fried" because when the egg wash hits the pan, the zucchini fries up beautifully golden. The dish isn't finished, however, until you kiss it with a fresh, bright squeeze of lemon. My husband and I make this often during the summer. It's a great afternoon snack. Not only is it easy and quick to make, but it's also delicious, nutritious, and filling. May you eat with joy! ~ ***Cleo***

Servings: This recipe is the perfect amount for two adult eaters. To serve a family, you can easily double, triple, or quadruple it.

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Ingredients:

1 young zucchini (about cucumber size)
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 eggs
2 tablespoons butter
1 lemon

Directions:

Step 1 – Wash and cut zucchini: Wash the zucchini's outside, pat dry, and cut into slices about ¼-inch thick. For a cucumber size zucchini, you'll get about 20 slices. You want the slices uniform, not too thin, not too thick, so that they will all cook evenly. No need to peel the skin. My husband and I actually enjoy the bit of crispness the deep green skin brings to this dish and young zukes have less of a harsh bite than older, larger ones.

Step 2 – Dredge in flour: Drop the slices in a zip lock bag with the 1/4 cup of flour and shake it baby, shake it! Of course, you can just put the flour in a dish and dredge each zucchini slice separately, but it will take longer. The plastic bag method saves time.

Step 3 – Float slices in eggs: Break two eggs into a pie plate or layer cake pan. Add about ¼ teaspoon of water and whisk with a fork. With clean fingers, take each slice of floured zucchini, one at a time out of the bag, and set them in the egg mixture. Flip each slice to coat both sides. A few slices may resist the egg coating, simply keep soaking and flip a few times in the egg mixture until the coating sticks. Let slices continue soaking while you melt the butter.

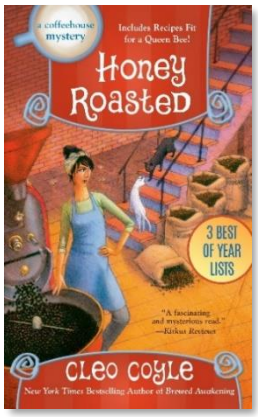
Step 4 – Melt the butter: Over medium heat, warm up a skillet and throw in 2 tablespoons of butter. Do not let it brown or burn. Once the butter is just melted, swish around the pan to evenly coat the bottom. Now turn OFF the heat. This will give you time to lay out all of your zucchini without worrying about some of them overcooking and others undercooking.

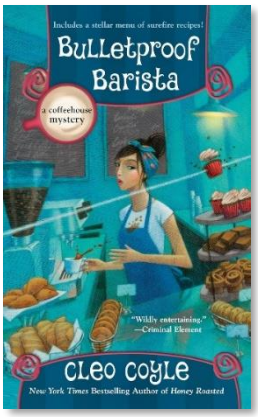
Step 5 – Fry the slices: One at a time, lay the egg-washed slices in the melted butter. Now turn the heat back ON and up to medium. Allow the zucchini to fry about 5 to 8 minutes on each side. Turn each slice over using the tips of two forks, one in each hand. (This is the best method because you can easily separate any clusters that may have fused together.) You may need to flip the slices one or two more times. The trick to this dish is cooking it long enough to get a nice brown color on the slices (see my photos). If you need to do a second or third batch, then continue adding a bit more butter to the pan, but BEWARE: Do not overdo the butter—too much butter will give you a soggy result!

Step 6 – Finish with lemon: This dish is best served hot, right out of the pan! Place the finished zucchini on a plate covered with a paper towel (to soak up any bit of extra grease) and squeeze fresh lemon wedges over the hot slices. Do not skip the lemon! This is not an optional garnish, it's essential for the Italian fried experience. Just as the bright tang of ketchup is added to French fries and malt vinegar is put on English fried fish to brighten those dishes and cut the heaviness of the fat, the lemon is the final layer of flavor that makes this dish a lively, lovely experience for your taste buds.

FINAL TIP: The real trick to getting this dish right is not using too much butter. Some cooks prefer to execute this dish with olive oil, but the taste will not be as nice, and please remember (if you decide to substitute oil for butter) to use it *very* sparingly. If you use too much butter or oil, your zucchini will come out soggy and too soft. Keep the fat content low and make sure you cook the zucchini enough to get the slices nicely browned but still a bit *al dente*. And may you…

Eat with joy! ~ Cleo





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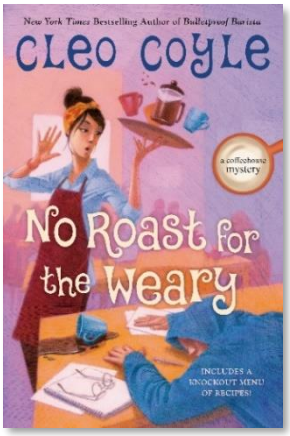

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