

OPTIONS FOR ONIONS

GARDENING SEASON

July to September



CHOOSING TIPS

An onion should be firm, hard, and heavy for its size. The outer skin may be slightly loose. Fresh onions also have a faint, sweet aroma. Do not choose onions that are shriveled, bruised, or decayed.

STORAGE

Onions can be stored in a cool, dry, well ventilated area for 4 to 5 weeks. Do not store onions in plastic, near potatoes, or in the refrigerator. Cut onions can be kept in a sealed container in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 days. Throw away any sprouting onions.

PREPARATION

Slice off the top and bottom, then slice from top to bottom, and peel off the outer layer. To avoid teary eyes, chill the onion in the freezer for ten minutes before slicing, or peel it under cold water. Onions may be used raw in sandwiches, soups and stews, or on salads. Frying or sautéing will provide a milder flavor and a sweet flavor if fried to a golden brown.



To bake:

Wrap in aluminum foil and bake for 45 to 60 minutes at 350°F.

To sauté:

Slice three medium onions. Heat one tablespoon of oil over low heat. Add onions and stir constantly for 5 to 10 minutes.



KEY NUTRIENTS

- ◆ Fiber to prevent constipation.
- ◆ Potassium to maintain normal blood pressure.

RECIPES

Fried Onions and Apples

- 3 large yellow onions, sliced
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 6 large tart red apples, sliced
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

In a large saucepan over medium heat sauté onions in butter until tender. Place apples on top of onions. Combine remaining ingredients; sprinkle over apples. Cover and simmer 10 minutes. Uncover and simmer 5 minutes longer or until apples are tender. Serve with a slotted spoon. Serves 12; 110 Cal; 2.5 g fat.



Oven-Roasted Potatoes and Onions

- 6 large potatoes, quartered
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- 6 medium onions, quartered
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon fresh marjoram, chopped
- 1 teaspoon black pepper

Preheat oven to 375°F. Place potatoes and onions in a shallow roasting pan. Combine oil and herbs and pour over the vegetables. Toss and bake uncovered for 1 hour, or until tender. Turn occasionally. Serves 8; 180 Cal; 7 g fat.

Growing Onions in Wisconsin

If you grow an assortment of onions such as sweet onions, storage onions, green onions, or scallions, you can extend your harvest season from early spring to late fall. High temperatures favor bulbing once a critical day length has been reached. Since yield is determined by the number of leaves present at bulb initiation, early planting ensures the maximum number of leaves and the largest bulbs.

Planting Onions

- Grow from seed, sets, or transplants
- Plant from mid-April to early May
- Onions require full sun
- Rotate onions with other vegetables—potatoes or carrots work well
- Seeding depth: 1/4 to 3/4 inches deep
- Transplant depth: 1 inch
- Space between rows: 16 to 24 inches
- Space between plants: 3 to 4 inches

Soil and Fertility

- Deep, fertile soils with adequate drainage
- Irrigated sandy soils work well
- Poor performance on clay soils
- Follow soil test recommendations
- Ideal pH is 6.0 to 6.8

Under optimum soil test levels apply...

5.25 oz of nitrogen per 100 sq ft

2.2 oz of phosphate per 100 sq ft

4.8 oz of potassium per 100 sq ft

Onions need relatively high amounts of manganese, copper, zinc, and molybdenum.



Selecting Onion Varieties

Onions are classified as either short-day, intermediate, or long day cultivars according to the number of hours of light required to initiate bulb formation. Long-day onions are grown in Wisconsin, requiring daylengths of 14 hours or longer to initiate bulbs. Typically, onions described as sweet should be eaten soon after harvest and onions described as dry can withstand prolonged storage.



Onions may be spherical, flattened, or conical in shape and have skin colors ranging from white to yellow to brown, and red to purple. Numerous white, yellow, and red long-day cultivars are available in Wisconsin. Selecting a variety of cultivars with maturities ranging from 95 to 110 days will lengthen the period for which onions will be ripe for picking.

Handling Your Onions

Harvest fresh onions when 15-25% of the tops have fallen over. Storage onions should be harvested when 50-80% of the tops have fallen over. Onions harvested with more than 80% of the tops dried down will be more susceptible to storage problems. Even though onions feel solid, they bruise easily and should be handled carefully to avoid damaging the bulb which can lead to storage rots. Remove the discolored outer skin and trim the leaves. Never underestimate the eye-appeal of gently cleaned produce!



Prepared by Nick Schneider, Clark County Crops and Soils Agent. April 2005. For more information contact your local Extension Office to obtain these references: *Growing onions, garlic, leeks and other alliums in Wisconsin*. Publication A3785. *Commercial Vegetable Production in Wisconsin*. Publication A3422.