

What's That Veg? Wednesday!

It seems like everywhere I look right now, there are farmers putting thousands of onion seeds into trays, ready to nurture them into full bulbs. Onions are probably one of the most widely used vegetables around and I'm pretty sure I use about one onion in my cooking every day!

That probably means we know everything about them, right? Well, maybe not! For today's What's That Veg Wednesday, I've compiled some facts you might find interesting!

Let's start with the basics:



Description: There are many different types of onions with different tastes. The white, or yellow globe, onion keeps its pungent flavor when cooked. All-purpose white or yellow onions are milder. Sweet onions, such as Bermuda, Spanish, and Italian, are the mildest.

Taste: Onions are the perfect seasoning for almost any cooked dish. Cooking them mellows their flavour.

Selection: Onions come in many different shapes and colours, none of which are reliable for choosing taste or strength. Pick onions that are dry and firm and have shiny tissue thin skins. Their necks (where they would attach to the green stems, not the roots) should be tight and dry, but not too dry.

Storage Tips: Dry onions (yellow, white, red) do not need refrigeration and should be stored in a dry and dark and cool place. They will last for about a month if stored properly. Tip: don't store onions with potatoes, but they do great stored with garlic. Green onions, however, need to be kept in the refrigerator in an open container or produce bag.

Season: Onions can be planted both in Fall and Spring, depending on the farmer and their growing practices. Onions tend to store well though, so cooking onions can be available all year.

Preparation: To keep tears from flowing, try slicing onions under running water. Or chill onions for an hour before cutting. To get the onion smell off your hands, rub your fingers with lemon juice or vinegar.

Common Questions

Why are red onions red?

The red colour of red onions is caused by the same natural pigment as what makes purple grapes purple and blueberries blue: anthocyanins.



Why do onions cause...gas?

Onions bring a lot to a dish...including some gas! They contain a natural sugar called fructose and during digestion, bacteria in your gut flock to the fructose and do their best to break them down; this process can create gas! This is similar to garlic, artichokes and other foods.

Why do onions make you cry?

Within a few moments of cutting open an onion, our eyes begin to water. Sometimes, it's just a mild irritation and other times, it's a full-on cry fest! But why?

These tears aren't emotional, they're reflexive. When an external irritant, such as dust or smoke, triggers nerve endings in the cornea, it communicates to the brain that there is an irritation in your eye. This alerts the **lachrymal gland** to stimulate tear production to flush away the invader.

What's the invader? Well, it goes all the way back to the soil! Onions absorb the sulfur in the earth as they grow which develops **amino acid sulfoxides**, if you want to get technical. This acid is drawn to a water source, your tears, and causes the reaction.

Different varieties of onions will release more or less of this acid and cause more or less tears. And, the more you cook with onions, the more resistant you'll be to their ~wiles~. You can read lots more about that [here](#).



Spring Onions, Green Onions, and Scallions: What's the Difference?

You might think that Spring Onions, Green Onions and Scallions are all just names for the same thing, and since people use the names interchangeably and the vegetables look pretty similar, the confusion makes A LOT of sense. A lot. Especially since different countries refer to the vegetables as different things.



Left: These don't produce a bulb and aren't meant to. The base has the same width stem all around and the greens are softer and often used as garnishes for dishes.

Right: These have a small bulb and can look like any variety of onion as they are simply onions harvested before they are fully grown. They have softer and milder bulbs, but tougher greens that aren't usually used as garnishes. The greens are great in stews however, and the bulbs taste wonderful roasted.

In the United States, **Scallions** and **Green Onions** are two names for the same thing, the veg on the left; however, **Spring Onions** refer to the veg on the right.

In Canada, we adopt a lot of customs/words from the U.S.A, Europe, and plenty of other countries and continents. It's common in Canada to refer to straight green onions, the veg on the left, as **Spring Onions**, but perhaps equally as common to use the U.S.A.'s terminology.

Ultimately, as long as you can tell the two apart by appearance and know how to cook with them, you're set!

Fun Facts!

1. Did you know that in the Middle Ages, onions were an acceptable form of currency and were used to pay for rent, goods and services – and even as gifts!? I just might try that for the next family birthday...
2. Apparently, if you've got cold feet, an onion is the answer! Some people claim that rubbing an onion on freezing toes is all you need to get the circulation going again. Give that a try and let us know!



3. According to The Guinness Book of World Records, the biggest onion ever was grown by British farmer Peter Glazebrook, who harvested a monster-sized onion in 2011 that weighed just under 18 pounds.

About

This year, we've started a new program! In an effort to share some valuable food knowledge, we've started "What's That Veg? Wednesdays" where each week, we'll be featuring one vegetable that's in season and sharing some interesting and hopefully useful information! We'll also be sure to include some fun facts and a recipe or two. If you have any specific questions about any vegetables or have any vegetables you want featured, let us know and we'll ask our experts (your farmers, of course!).

Why? Well, food knowledge is extremely important and we may be surprised at the things we or others don't know about the fresh foods available to us. And the more we know, the more likely we are to try the food and receive its benefits.

Link to PDF: <http://coventmarket.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/WTVW-Onions.pdf>

