

More About Onions

It's hard to imagine cooking without onions. Finding a beef stew recipe without onions is like finding a needle in a haystack.

Onions belong to the allium family, which also includes leeks, chives, shallots, and garlic. Thanks to farmers markets, we have access to a wide variety of onions, from spring onions to garlic scapes and from red to yellow to white.

Spring onions can be purchased early in the growing season. These are harvested before they have the chance to form a bulb. Spring onions have a higher moisture content and should be refrigerated. They can be used in the same manner as scallions.

Garlic scapes are a new item at farmers markets. For the garlic plant to produce a larger clove, the flower bud, or scape, must be removed before it flowers. Although scapes have a garlic flavor, they are milder.

Red onions contain a water-soluble pigment, anthocyanin, which is lost during cooking.

White onions tend to have a higher moisture content than yellow onions. Yellow onions generally have the lowest moisture content and are a good onion for storing.



Green Onion Corn Bread

Serves 10

Ingredients:

Nonstick vegetable oil spray
¼ cup (½ stick) butter
1 cup sliced green onions
2 cups yellow cornmeal
1 cup all purpose flour
½ cup sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1½ cups buttermilk
2 large eggs, beaten to blend

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Lightly spray a 13x9x2 inch metal baking pan with nonstick spray. Melt butter in medium skillet over medium heat. Add green onions (green and white parts), and sauté until beginning to soften, about 3 minutes. Cool.
2. Whisk cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in medium bowl to blend. Add onion-butter mixture, buttermilk and eggs; stir until just combined. Transfer batter to prepared pan.
3. Bake corn bread until edges are lightly browned and toothpick inserted into center comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Cool completely.
4. Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Wrap tightly in foil and store at room temperature.



Asparagus on English Muffin

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1¼ pounds fresh asparagus, trimmed
2 Tablespoons finely chopped onion
2 Tablespoons butter
2 Tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon pepper
Dash ground nutmeg
½ cup chicken broth
½ cup milk
2 English muffins, toasted
8 slices Canadian Bacon
½ cup shredded cheese, preferably a white cheese

Directions:

1. In a large skillet, bring ½ inch of water to a boil. Add asparagus. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 3-5 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain well; set aside.
2. In a small saucepan, sauté onion in 2 table-spoons butter. Stir in the flour, pepper, and nutmeg. Gradually add broth and milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly.
3. Cut English muffins in half; arrange in an ungreased 13 x 9 inch baking dish. Top with 2 slices of Canadian bacon, asparagus and white sauce. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered at 400°F for 8-10 minutes, or until bubbly.



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Rhubarb Strawberry Cake

Serves 12-16

Ingredients:

3 cups sliced rhubarb
1 cup fresh strawberries, sliced
½ cup sugar
1 box yellow or white cake mix

Directions:

1. Combine strawberries, rhubarb, and sugar and stir, set aside.
2. Make cake mix according to package directions.
3. Pour strawberry rhubarb mixture into a 13 x 9 inch baking dish. Pour cake batter over fruit. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center and comes out clean.



Note: A two-layer cake recipe may be used instead of a cake mix.

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Sautéed Spinach with Red Onion and Bacon

Serves 2

Ingredients:

1 strip bacon
¼ cup thinly sliced red onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 bag (10-ounce) fresh spinach

Directions:

1. Cook bacon in a large nonstick skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Remove bacon and set aside.
2. Add onion and cook, stirring, until beginning to soften, about 1 minute. Add garlic and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 30 seconds more.
3. Add spinach and cook, stirring until just wilted, about 2 minutes. Place on a serving dish and top with bacon. Serve immediately.

Note: The sturdier texture of mature spinach stands up better to sautéing than baby spinach.



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