

Onions

Pull green onions anytime after the tops are 6 inches tall. Green onions become stronger in flavor with age and increasing size. They may be used for cooking when they are too strong to eat raw. Though leaves are traditionally discarded, all parts above the roots are edible.

Scallions and Green Onions

Scallions can be harvested any time they look tall enough to use. Gently pull or dig well below the slender white portion when the leaves are 8 to 10 inches high. True scallions have no bulb. Select healthy bright green tops that look crisp.

Green onions or spring onions are a step above scallions although the terms are often used interchangeably. They have a 1-2 inch bulb with green tops. The smaller bulbs are sweet while the larger ones are more pungent. Left in the ground longer, the bulb will develop and become larger.

Scallions and green onions are best harvested as you use them. For longer storage, rinse soil from bulbs and dry, peeling away the first layer if necessary, trim roots and store in the refrigerator for up to a week in perforated plastic bags.

Why do onions make you cry? When you cut into an onion, the cell walls are damaged releasing a sulfur compound called propanethial-S-oxide which floats into the air. This compound is converted to sulfuric acid when it comes in contact with water which is why it stings your eyes. Chilling inactivates the propanethial-S-oxide so it does not float into the air. Thus, no tears.

To keep eyes dry when chopping onions, try chilling peeled onions in the refrigerator before chopping. To get the onion smell off your hands, rub with lemon juice or vinegar. To freshen onion breath, chew a little parsley or a coffee bean.

Home Preservation

There is no successful way to preserve scallions and green onions for more than a few days. However, mature onions can be dried and hung in mesh bags or braided together and stored in a cool (50 to 60 degrees) for several months.

Recipes

Onion and Celery Seed Relish

1 cup white wine vinegar or distilled white vinegar
2 tablespoons confectioners' (powdered) sugar
2 tablespoons celery seeds

2 cups thinly sliced small onions, no green tops
1 cup finely chopped celery
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

In a salad bowl, stir together the vinegar and sugar until the sugar dissolves. Add the celery seed, onions, and celery and mix well until combined. Cover and chill several hours or overnight. Serve very cold. Serve on sandwiches, as a side for any meal, or mix with your favorite lettuce salad. Makes 3 cups.

Serving Suggestions for Fresh Greens/Scallions

Take one cup chopped or sliced green onions and scallions and saute-braise them in one tablespoon each of butter and olive oil. Cook slowly until softened and slightly golden. As the onions cook the flavor mellows, yet it intensifies.

Grilled green onions -- Wash and trim 6 to 8 green onions. Place on a sheet of aluminum foil. Squeeze the juice of half a lime over onions. Sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon of dried thyme, salt and pepper to taste. Seal foil around onions. Place on the grill, on the side away from direct heat or over low coals. Grill for 30 minutes. Serve with other grilled foods. Delicious.

Chop fresh scallions and use to top beans, fresh lettuce salads, or use to perk up and add crunch to any cooked vegetable.