



SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

ONIONS

AN ONION A DAY...

The humble but absolutely essential onion has long been a staple for meal preparation. They are used in a wide range of ethnic cuisines and traditional American fare. From soups and sandwiches, to appetizers, salads and more; onions add color, texture and flavor to many recipes.

Spring/summer onions are routinely sweeter and milder than the storage onions because they have a high water and sugar content. This also makes them more susceptible to bruising. These onions are available in red, white and yellow throughout their season that begins in April and ends in August.

The storage onion is known for its intense flavor and higher percentage of solids. Red, white and yellow varieties are available throughout their season that begins in August and goes through March.

The red onion is a good choice for fresh uses or in grilling and char-broiling. White onions, with its golden color and sweet flavor when sauteed, are the traditional onion used in classic Mexican cuisine. Yellow onions turn a rich, dark brown when cooked and give French Onion Soup its tangy sweet flavor.

There are few other vegetables that offer so much flavor at such a small caloric investment. Onions in particular contain a variety of naturally occurring chemicals that have been linked to lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels. They are low in sodium, contain no saturated fat add dietary fiber and provide a source of vitamin C and potassium. Onions are the foundation of so many good things to eat it's hard to imagine any meal without them. Sliced into salads, chopped into stews, grilled with steaks or simmered in sauces...the possibilities are limitless.

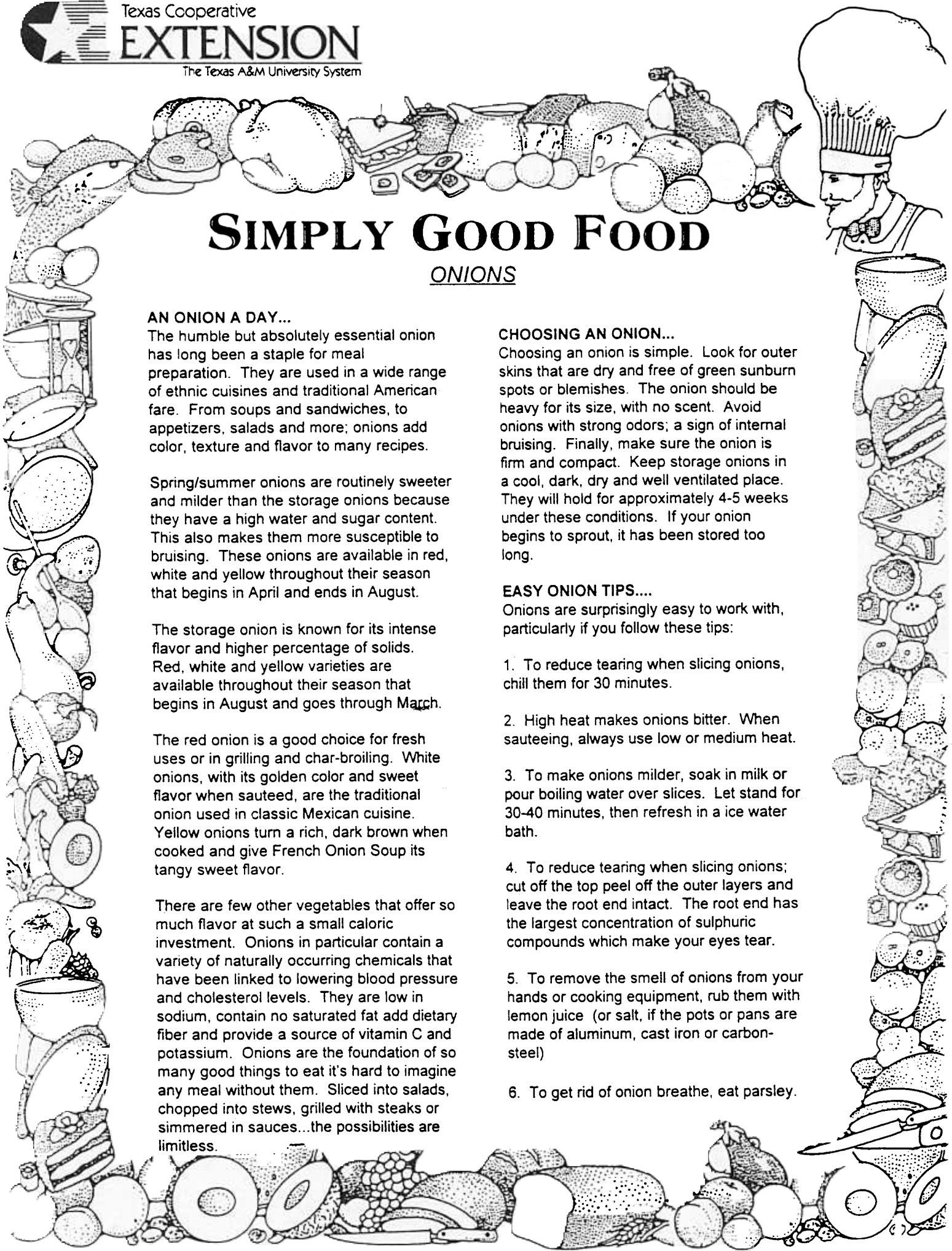
CHOOSING AN ONION...

Choosing an onion is simple. Look for outer skins that are dry and free of green sunburn spots or blemishes. The onion should be heavy for its size, with no scent. Avoid onions with strong odors; a sign of internal bruising. Finally, make sure the onion is firm and compact. Keep storage onions in a cool, dark, dry and well ventilated place. They will hold for approximately 4-5 weeks under these conditions. If your onion begins to sprout, it has been stored too long.

EASY ONION TIPS....

Onions are surprisingly easy to work with, particularly if you follow these tips:

1. To reduce tearing when slicing onions, chill them for 30 minutes.
2. High heat makes onions bitter. When sauteeing, always use low or medium heat.
3. To make onions milder, soak in milk or pour boiling water over slices. Let stand for 30-40 minutes, then refresh in a ice water bath.
4. To reduce tearing when slicing onions; cut off the top peel off the outer layers and leave the root end intact. The root end has the largest concentration of sulphuric compounds which make your eyes tear.
5. To remove the smell of onions from your hands or cooking equipment, rub them with lemon juice (or salt, if the pots or pans are made of aluminum, cast iron or carbon-steel)
6. To get rid of onion breathe, eat parsley.





CARAMELIZED ONIONS

Caramelized onions are a quick way to add the sweet, rich, slow-cooked flavor of onions to many dishes such as pizza, pasta, lasagna, sandwiches, seafood, or just about anything!

4 pounds yellow onions, peeled, sliced 1/8 inch thick
12 ounces unsalted butter
2 ½ teaspoons Kosher salt
1 teaspoon Black pepper, fresh ground
2 teaspoons fresh minced herbs, such as thyme, rosemary, sage or savory, optional
makes 12 servings (approximately ½ cup each)

1. Place onions, butter, salt and pepper in a heavy saute' pan. Cook mixture slowly over low heat stirring often.
2. After about 10 minutes, onions will begin to turn golden brown. If herbs are desired, add to onion mixture.
3. Continue to cook an additional 15-20 minutes until all onions are translucent, tender and golden brown.
4. Cool onions on a sheet pan in the refrigerator, then place in an airtight container and keep refrigerated until ready to use. Onions may be made ahead and kept refrigerated up to 5 days.

To rewarm caramelized onions, heat over medium-low heat in a saute' pan.

OTHER WAYS TO EAT ONIONS

Slice red and white onions paper-thin, toss with anchovies, capers, and vinaigrette dressing for a unique onion salad.

Alternate slices of tomatoes, onion, and mozzarella cheese. Drizzle with olive oil and top with fresh chopped basil for a classic Italian appetizer.

Garnish salad with thinly sliced onion rings.

Onion canapes can be made by topping buttered, trimmed, sandwich bread with thinly sliced onions and watercress. Cut bread into decorative shapes.

Bake small onions stuffed with wild rice, cheese, or crab meat for an unusual onion appetizer.

For tangy onion sandwiches, top baguettes, rolls or bagels with flavored cream cheese, paper-thin slices of onions and fresh herbs.

Create a Mediterranean style pizza with caramelized onions, olives, and goat cheese on a wheat crust.

For a savory side dish, season whole, peeled onions with butter, soy sauce or other marinade and bake until tender.

Toss cooked whole onions in butter and sprinkle with chopped parsley and fresh herbs.

Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being

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