

Take an Onion

*Answers to “What’s for Dinner?”
and more than you ever wanted to know
about onions*



By Susie Snortum

What does a professional chef make the family for dinner? The answer varies with every chef, of course. It also varies with every evening, every mood, and what's in the pantry. My most common answer to the question is that I take an onion, and while I'm peeling and chopping it, I decide what I'll make.

Here's a collection of my favorite go-to recipes that include onions. Many are simple and can be adapted to whatever other ingredients are on hand. Some are special. Some are for serious onion lovers only.

Whatever your relationship with onions, I hope you find some easy answers here for the timeless question — “What can I make for dinner tonight?” Thanks for reading.



Copyright: Susie Snortum, 2014

Lulu Press, Inc.

3101 Hillsborough St, Raleigh, NC 27607

www.lulu.com

Table of Contents

About Onions	6
Breakfast Recipes	10
Soups & Salads	17
Appetizers & Snacks	28
Chicken & Poultry Entrees	36
Beef Entrees	43
Pork Entrees	58
Seafood Entrees	62
Vegetarian Entrees	66
Sauces, Sides & Condiments	70
Index	81

"Banish (the onion) from the kitchen and the pleasure flies with it. Its presence lends color and enchantment to the most modest dish; its absence reduces the rarest delicacy to hopeless insipidity, and dinner to despair."

-Elizabeth Robbins Pennell, American columnist

Onions

BY [WILLIAM MATTHEWS](#)

*How easily happiness begins by
dicing onions. A lump of sweet butter
slithers and swirls across the floor
of the sauté pan, especially if its
errant path crosses a tiny slick
of olive oil. Then a tumble of onions.*

*This could mean soup or risotto
or chutney (from the Sanskrit
chatni, to lick). Slowly the onions
go limp and then nacreous
and then what cookbooks call clear,
though if they were eyes you could see*

*clearly the cataracts in them.
It's true it can make you weep
to peel them, to unfurl and to tease
from the taut ball first the brittle,
caramel-colored and decrepit
papery outside layer, the least*

*recent the reticent onion
wrapped around its growing body,
for there's nothing to an onion
but skin, and it's true you can go on
weeping as you go on in, through
the moist middle skins, the sweetest*

*and thickest, and you can go on
in to the core, to the bud-like,
acid, fibrous skins densely
clustered there, stalky and in-
complete, and these are the most
pungent, like the nuggets of nightmare*

*and rage and murmury animal
comfort that infant humans secrete.
This is the best domestic perfume.
You sit down to eat with a rumor
of onions still on your twice-washed
hands and lift to your mouth a hint*

*of a story about loam and usual
endurance. It's there when you clean up
and rinse the wine glasses and make
a joke, and you leave the minutest
whiff of it on the light switch,
later, when you climb the stairs.*

*William Matthews, "Onions" from Selected Poems and Translations, 1969-1991.
Copyright © 1992 by William Matthews.*



About Onions



Photo source: epicurious.com

This photo includes garlic and ramps as well as the many varieties of onions. They are all members of the allium genus. Each variety has its own characteristics, but many of them are completely interchangeable.

1. Yellow onion — aka Spanish onion, the most common variety in the U.S.
2. Shallots — milder than yellow onions, common in French cooking.
3. White onion — tangy and not too strong, common in Mexican and South American cuisine.
4. Garlic — great paired with onions in myriad recipes and cuisines, but not our focus here.
5. Pearl onions — small and mild flavored, can be creamed, roasted, glazed, and pickled.

6. Red or Purple onion — although the strongest onion, these are often served raw in salads.
7. Sweet onions — aka Walla Walla, Bermuda, Maui, or Vidalia.
8. Wild leeks — aka ramps, smaller than cultivated leeks with flavor more like garlic than scallions. Entire plant is edible and usually served whole, unlike cultivated leeks of which the leaves are not eaten.
9. Scallions — aka green onions or spring onions. Used raw, including green stalks. Keep refrigerated.
10. Italian onions — aka cipollini, smaller, flatter, and milder than most varieties, good when onion is the main ingredient.

Word Origin

The origin of the name "onion" comes from the classical period when it was given the Latin name **unio** that means oneness or unity, or a kind of single onion. The French call it **oignon**. Martin Elcort in his book ***The Secret Life of Food*** writes, "The word (onion) was created by adding the onion-shaped letter o to the word union, yielding a new spelling **ounion**. The letter u was later dropped to create the modern spelling. A union is something that is indivisible and which, if taken apart, is destroyed in the process, like an onion." Source: vegparadise.com.

How to Purchase

Onions are harvested in the late summer, but keep well at room temperature for several months. A cool, dry place will extend their lives. Choose firm, uniform shaped onions with unblemished skins. Several fungi grow on onions, and if they're visible on the outside, they've probably damaged the inside. Sweet onions tend to be a lot larger than common yellow onions, and a lot more expensive most of the year. Since the sweet varieties tend not to last as long, you may want to use them in season in September

and October, and resort to common yellow onions the rest of the year. Green onions are grown year-round. Look for firm, bright green leaf stalks and white, not-overly-large bases. If scallions start to form a round, bulbous root, they won't be as sweet and mild.

How to Grow

Onions are simple to grow at home. They like any soil and a neutral pH. Soil should be rich in nitrogen and not packed too tightly. Raised beds are ideal, or you can form mounds of soil about 4" tall. Onion seeds don't keep very long — you'll do better with onion sets. Start them in the spring as soon as the weather will stay above 20 degrees F. Plant only the lower third of the bulb, or about 1" into the soil. Onions need a lot of feeding, so fertilize well and often, and rotate crops.

When the leaf stalks start to yellow, the onions are probably ripe. Be careful to air dry them for several weeks before piling together in a root cellar or container. Check carefully for bruises — any bruise will likely start to rot.



*"Why is it that the poet tells
So little of the sense of smell?
These are the odors I love well:
The smell of coffee freshly ground;
Or rich plum pudding, holly crowned;
Or onions fried and deeply browned."*

-Christopher Morley, poet

Nutrition Information

An average-size yellow onion contains around 45 calories, 3 grams of fiber, 9 grams sugars, and about 11 grams total carbohydrates. It has 20% of your daily vitamin C requirement, 5% of your vitamin B-6, and 4% of your potassium. It also contains small amounts of calcium, iron, and magnesium.

Onions, as well as other veggies in the allium genus, can irritate one's digestive system. If you suffer from excess gas, bloating, cramping, and/or IBS (irritable bowel), these plants might be the culprit.

On the other hand, onions contain phenolics and flavonoids that have potential anti-inflammatory, anti-cholesterol, anti-cancer, and antioxidant properties (according to Wikipedia).

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1 medium onion (148g)			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 45		Calories from Fat 0	
		% Daily Value*	
Total Fat	0g		0%
Saturated Fat 0g			0%
Trans Fat 0g			0%
Cholesterol	0mg		0%
Sodium	5mg		0%
Total Carbohydrate	11g		4%
Dietary Fiber 3g			12%
Sugars 9g			
Protein 1g			
Vitamin A 0%		Vitamin C 20%	
Calcium 4%		Iron 4%	
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
		Calories	2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less Than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less Than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less Than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less Than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat 9	Carbohydrate	4	Protein 4

Breakfast Recipes

Caramelized Onion, Kale, and Mushroom Breakfast Casserole

1 medium onion, diced
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 bell pepper, chopped small
6-8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
2 cups chopped kale
1 tsp. Italian herb seasoning or
your herb of choice
10 eggs
1/2 cup milk
2 cups shredded mild cheese
(Jack, mozzarella, mild cheddar—whatever)
pepper to taste



Sauté the onions in the oil on low heat until soft and just starting to brown. Add remaining vegetables and cook another 3-4 minutes. Stir in the thyme. Remove from heat and transfer to a greased casserole or 9x13" baking pan. Allow to cool while preparing eggs.

Whisk the eggs with the milk and a good grind of pepper — 1/2 to 1 teaspoon. Sprinkle the cheese over the veggies, then pour the egg mixture over all. Agitate gently with a fork to ensure that all ingredients are coated with egg mixture. (It's OK to just stir it all together if you want.) Bake at 375 for about 40 minutes, or until eggs are set. Let rest a few minutes before serving. This is good with any variety of veggies, meats, & cheeses.



Archeologists discovered small onions in the eye sockets in the mummy of King Ramses IV, who died in 1160 BC. To the Egyptians, the onion, with its concentric layers, represented eternal life and was buried with each of their Pharaohs. *Source: vegparadise.com*

Farmhouse Breakfast Skillet

- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ green bell pepper, diced
- ½ red bell pepper, diced
- ¼ pound hot links sausage, sliced
- ¼ pound cooked crumbled sausage
- 8 eggs
- 1/2 cup milk or water
- ½ pound grated mild cheddar cheese



Sauté vegetables and meats in large non-stick skillet. When vegetables are soft, add slightly beaten eggs combined with water or milk. Cook, scraping bottom and blending gently, until eggs are set. Stir in cheese.



Eggs can be added to so many combinations of foods, and they're an inexpensive, good-quality source of protein. Play around with your vegetables. Pour the mixture into a crust and bake as a quiche instead of cooking on the stovetop (be sure and pre-sauté the veggies). Add more milk and torn-up stale bread and bake as a mock-soufflé. Try it with spinach & mushrooms, or crab & asparagus.

Tearing causes tearing: Tears come from enzymes called alliinases. When cell walls are broken, the enzymes undergo a chemical reaction and release the gas that stings our eyes, unseen but deadly. Minimize the cell breakage and you'll stay dry-eyed. Use cold onions, rinsed in cold water. Chop quickly with a VERY sharp knife. And save the root end for last -- it has the most alliinases.



Hash Brown Casserole

- 1 can cream of mushroom,
celery, potato, or cheese soup,
or 1 1/2 cups white cream sauce
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 2 pounds frozen hash-brown potatoes
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 8 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste



Stir together the soup or sauce, sour cream, and melted butter. Place the potatoes and onion in a greased 2 qt. casserole or 9x13" baking pan. Stir in the sauce mixture and a little black pepper. Top with cheese. Bake at 350 for about 45 minutes, depending on pan size and shape. Serves about 12 as a side dish.

Use this as a base for a variety of brunch dishes. Crumble some corn flakes on top. Throw in a can of diced green chilies, or some leftover ham, or some colorful diced bell peppers. Use 2 pounds of fresh potatoes — heck, leave the skins on; they're good for you! (Not that this recipe has any redeeming health qualities.)

Going for healthy? Try fat-free sour cream or plain yogurt, a homemade cream sauce, and reduced fat cheese. Although texture won't be the same, you'll cut out enough fat calories to justify putting bacon on top.



Onions can repel biting insects. If you're willing to rub raw onion all over your exposed skin, the mosquitoes will stay away. So will your friends, most likely.



Onion Poppy Seed Scones

What's the difference between scones and biscuits? Who cares? OK, if you want to get technical, most people claim that scones include egg. Biscuits are more often plain, while scones have endless varieties. Scones are more often sweetened. Scones are often cut in wedges, whereas biscuits are usually cut in circles or squares. (The cutting of both is important — a clean, straight cut contributes to a better rise, resulting in a fluffier texture.) The only comparison that all folks seem to agree on is that scones are a Great Britain quick bread, and biscuits hail from the American south. Whatever you call them, make them fresh and serve them warm. These are meant to be easy, quick, and enjoyed immediately.



3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
2 tablespoons poppy seeds
1 1/4 sticks (5 oz.) firm butter
1 egg
1/2 cup milk
1/4 cup finely-chopped onion,
or 2 tablespoons dry minced onion



Stir the dry ingredients together. Cut in butter, using a pastry cutter, two forks, or by rubbing (see below).

If using dry onion, add it to the milk and allow to rest for a couple of minutes. Beat the egg with a fork until smooth and stir in the milk and onion. Add the liquid mixture to the dry ingredients and toss gently just until moistened. Do not over-mix. Shape dough into an 8" circle on a lightly-floured surface. Cut into eight wedges. Place on greased or paper-lined baking sheet and bake at 375F for about 25 minutes. If desired, brush tops with butter after baking.

Try adding a little grated parmesan or Swiss cheese. How about some crumbled bacon? Caramelize the onions before adding? Use green onions. Leave out the poppy seeds. There are no rules!

Rubbing butter into dry mixture contributes to flakier pastries. It's a technique most often used in pie crust, or pate brisee. With cool hands, rub pieces of butter between layers of flour until all butter is dispersed evenly in flat, pea-sized pieces. Do not over-mix. I don't notice a big difference between rubbing and using a pastry cutter, and a pastry cutter is less messy. Let me know if you disagree.



What's the difference between green onions and yellow onions? Well, green onions are ... green. It's a good idea to thin your onion plants 20-30 days after planting, anyway, so you might as well eat them fresh. But don't pick them all — you'll want some big, beautiful yellow onions when the fall weather kicks in. Spring onions, on the other hand, have a partially-formed bulb. Three kinds of onions from one plant — what a deal!



Onion Quiche (Tarte a L'oignon)

- 1/2 pound sliced bacon, cut into 1 inch pieces
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 1/2 cups 1/2 & 1/2
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 6 eggs
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1 (10 inch) pie crust

Whisk the eggs, add the milk, and blend until evenly combined. Place the bacon and cheese in the pie crust.

Pour the milk and egg mixture over. Bake at 350 for 45 minutes or until center is set, not runny. Cool 5 minutes before slicing.



Pie Crust: Stir 1 tsp. salt into 1 cup all-purpose flour. Cut in 1/3 cup butter until evenly incorporated. Add 1/3 cup ice water all at

once, and toss gently just until dough comes together. Press into a circle on a well-floured board and roll out to 11 inches. Lift into 9" pie pan, being careful not to stretch the dough. Roll and crimp edges, taking care to create an even thickness all around.

Quiche is one of those things that you can make with just about anything. Eggs and milk or cream are whisked together and poured over a pie crust filled with bacon & cheese, crab & asparagus, mushrooms & spinach — you're limited only by your imagination. Just make sure vegetables are cooked before you add them so they don't make the quiche too soggy. Quiche can just as easily be a dessert, but is most often called a custard pie in that context. Same difference. This recipe has a ton of onions in it. Vary the amount to suit your taste.



Soups & Salads

You're kidding, right? No one would use raw onions as a main ingredient in salads. No, I'm not kidding! Here's the trick, though. Keep your onions refrigerated. Before making salad, slice onions very thin, place in a bowl and cover with cold water. Toss slices around until the water gets cloudy. Drain off the water, add fresh ice water, and let onions soak for 10-15 minutes. You can change the water and soak again if you like, for even milder flavor. Use a sweet and sour dressing, like honey mustard, to help offset the strong onion flavor.

Basic Potato Salad

- 5 pounds russet potatoes
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 small red onion
- 1/2 bunch celery
- 1 bunch scallions/green onions
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4-6 hard-boiled eggs (optional)



Peel the potatoes if you must, but the skins are awfully good. Cut potatoes into 1.5" cubes. Yeah, right — like I'm going to make sure every piece is a cube. Do this instead: Slice the potatoes in half lengthwise, and cut the halves in half lengthwise, so you have 4 long quarters. Line them up on the cutting board and with a large chef's knife; slice about 1/2" thick. As long as slices are the same thickness, they'll cook in about the same amount of time.

As you cut each potato, put the pieces in a bowl of cold water to keep them from discoloring. No need to pre-wash them. Once they're all cut, drain and place in a large pot of boiling water. Or

start with cold water — root vegetables aren't picky. Once boiling, cook 10-15 minutes depending on size, just until fork-tender. Remove from heat, drain, and rinse in cold water.

OK, now the hard part's done! Just chop up the onions and celery and toss everything together. Adjust seasoning to taste. Add eggs at the end if you use them, so they don't crumble apart.

This recipe is only a starting place. Try using a vinaigrette instead of mayo and mustard. Throw in some frozen peas. Add some bacon. Use sweet potatoes!



Butter Lettuce and Orange Salad with Red Onions

This one is just too simple. Slice a red onion and soak in ice water as described above. Wash and tear a head of butter lettuce. Slice a couple of oranges and arrange on top of lettuce. Or use a can of mandarins. Top with rings of onion. Serve with a light vinaigrette, or try a drizzle of good balsamic vinegar.



Now, get creative. Throw in an avocado. Some pomegranate kernels! A few toasted pecans. That's the ticket.

Cabbage Patch Soup

If you're thinking soup, and you take an onion and start chopping it, this is about the best thing you can end up with. Thanks, Mom, for making this a family standard.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion
- 3-4 ribs of celery
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 15 oz. can kidney beans
- 1 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1/2 head green cabbage, sliced, chopped, or shredded
- 2 cups water or broth
- 1 tablespoon mild red chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste



Heat a 4-5 quart pot on medium high and add the oil. Chop the onion in roughly a medium dice. Slice the celery. Add onion, celery, and ground beef to the hot pan and sauté, stirring often, until meat is fully cooked and onion is transparent. Add beans, tomatoes, cabbage, and liquid. Cover and heat to boiling. Reduce heat and continue cooking about 10 minutes, or until cabbage is fully cooked. Add chili powder and salt & pepper to taste.



"I will not move my army without onions!" -Ulysses S. Grant

"It's hard to imagine civilization without onions." -Julia Child

*"Life is like an onion. You peel it off one layer at a time;
And sometimes you weep."* -Carl Sandburg, American poet

Cauliflower “Cream” Soup

Weight Watchers never stuck with me, but some of the recipes did. Cauliflower makes a delicious and healthy creamy soup base without adding a bunch of carbs and fat.

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 medium onions
- 1 large head cauliflower
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1 quart chicken or vegetable broth



Heat the oil in a 4-5 quart pot while chopping the onions. Any shape or size of onion pieces will be fine — they’ll be pureed. Add the onion to the oil and sauté about 5 minutes or until onion is completely soft. While that’s cooking, chop up the cauliflower. Add cauliflower, wine, and broth to the pot. Bring to boil, then reduce heat and simmer for at least 20 minutes. You want that cauliflower to be very soft.

Puree mixture, a little at a time, in a blender. (I’ve tried using an immersion blender, but it doesn’t work as well.) Add salt and white pepper to taste.



If you love cauliflower, cook some more separately and add to soup after pureeing. Soup is great garnished with a little pesto, or crumbled bacon and shredded cheese. (No, that part isn’t in the diet.) Try adding carrots and a little ginger. Or broccoli!

Chicken Soup

Just a starting place — soup is what you do with whatever's on hand. Rice instead of noodles, or lots more veggies, or thicker broth. Also, this is one of the few good places for turnips.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped to about 1/2" pieces
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and sliced, or just sliced
- 5-6 stalks celery, sliced
- 2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts or other poultry meat, cut in bite-size pieces
- 1 1/2 quarts broth, or water plus soup base or bouillon cubes
- 4 cloves garlic (or 2 tablespoons minced garlic)
- 4 tablespoons flour (optional)
- 1 tablespoon Italian herb seasoning or other herbs
- 1 pound potatoes, cut in large dice (optional)
- A cup or two of frozen peas
- 1/2 pound wide egg noodles
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil in 6-quart soup pot. Add onions, carrots, and celery, and sauté until onion is translucent. If the chicken is raw, add it now. Stir together broth, garlic, herbs, and flour, and add to veggies. Add potatoes. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for about 30 minutes. If the chicken was pre-cooked, add it now. You can add the noodles in the last 10 minutes, or cook them separately and add to each serving so they don't get too mushy. Add the peas at the very end.



Four Bean Salad

Let's just get something straight — green beans are supposed to be green. When they come out of a can, they're brown. I don't know if any canned food is worse than canned green beans. Oh, wait. Canned spinach, and canned peas. Let's just not go there, please. Use fresh or frozen green beans. Thank you.

1 red onion

1 can red kidney beans

1 can garbanzo beans

1 can (or 1 11-oz. pkg. frozen) yellow wax beans

8-12 oz. fresh or frozen green beans, blanched

1 red bell pepper

Dressing

Chop onion or slice into thin strips, and place mixing bowl or a gallon zipper-lock bag. Drain and rinse all the canned beans and add to onion. Add the fresh or frozen beans, which have been cooked to desired degree of doneness (and are, hopefully, still green). Chop the bell pepper and add it. Combine dressing ingredients and add to veggies. Allow to marinate at least 1/2 hour, but several hours is better. Either drain before serving or serve with a slotted spoon.



Dressing: 1/2 cup EACH of red wine vinegar, olive oil, and granulated sugar, 1 clove garlic (minced), a dash of Worcestershire sauce, and salt & pepper to taste.

French Onion Soup

- 2 lbs. medium onions
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 stick (1/4 cup) butter
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 3/4 cup white wine
- 1 quart beef broth
- 1 1/2 cups water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 6 (1/2-inch-thick) slices of dense sourdough bread,
of a size that fits in your soup ramekins
- 1/2 pound Gruyère or Swiss cheese
- 2 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese



Cut the onions in half from stem to tip, then slice thinly into half-rings. Sauté the onions, thyme, and bay leaf in the butter in a heavy kettle over medium heat, allowing the onions to caramelize. Stir occasionally but not too much — you want them to color nicely but not burn. When they're a deep golden brown, stir in the flour until evenly distributed. Add the wine, which will deglaze the pan. Continue cooking until fully hot again, then add the broth and water. (It's OK to use water and soup base or bouillon, but it won't be nearly as good as homemade broth. It's also OK to use veggie broth for your non-meat eaters, but again, not as good.) Simmer for about a half hour.

While soup simmers, toast the bread slices in a 350F oven until completely dry, turning once. This will take about 15 minutes. Remove bread from oven and preheat the broiler.

Arrange soup ramekins on a shallow baking sheet. Fill them with hot soup, and float a toast slice on top of each. Top the toast with thin slices of gruyere. (It's traditional, but messy, to lay the cheese over the edges of the bowls.) Top gruyere with Parmesan. Place under broiler and heat until cheese is lightly browned and bubbly.

Note: Onion soup is a whole lot easier to eat if you use croutons instead of whole bread slices. But that's not traditional, donch'a know. Traditional, schmaditional — it's your soup; make it how you want.



Says here you can reverse hair loss and graying by applying onion juice to your hair. It's true! It was on line! Juice an onion, or puree and strain it, and rub the fresh, raw juice into your scalp. Leave it in for 30-60 minutes. Every day. For six weeks! "One study from the Journal of Dermatology found that just after four weeks of using onion juice, 74% of individuals with alopecia areata experienced significant hair regrowth. Within six weeks of using



onion juice, 84% of the individuals were reported to have hair regrowth." I got this information from HealthExtremist.com. Share with all your friends who have alopecia areata!

Minestrone

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 quart beef broth (or vegetable broth)
- 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 1 (15-ounce) can white beans, drained
- 1 tablespoon Italian herb seasoning
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 2 cups cooked pasta (I prefer small shells)
- 1 medium zucchini, chopped
- 2 cups chopped frozen spinach



Sauté the onion, carrots, and celery in olive oil until they start to soften. Add broth, tomatoes, beans, and seasoning. Simmer together for a good 15-20 minutes. Five minutes before serving, add pasta, zucchini, and spinach. Bring back to boil, then serve with grated Parmesan or Romano cheese and crusty bread.

Humble Beginnings: From France's mirepoix (onion, carrot, celery) to Germany's Suppengrün (carrot, celeriac, leek) to the famous Holy Trinity of Cajun cooking (onion, celery, green bell pepper), almost every cuisine in the world starts with a common simple, balanced, vegetable base. What do these groups of produce have in common? At the most basic level, they begin recipes—from soups to curries to roasts—and lend them flavor. They also often come from a category of vegetables and herbs called aromatics. In the Western world, these might include garlic, onions, carrots, celery, bay leaves, thyme, parsley, and peppercorns, while in Asia you might find green onions, ginger, garlic, and warm spices. Finally, they're almost always sautéed to gently tease out flavors that permeate the rest of the dish. Source: seriouseats.com



Potato Soup Base

A lot of cream soup recipes start with a basic white sauce (1-2 tablespoons of butter and flour per cup of milk). Kind of boring, though, and not particularly healthy. Use some root veggies, and it's a whole different critter.

2 medium yellow or white onions
6-8 russet potatoes (about 3 pounds)
1/2 bunch celery
1/4 cup olive oil
1 quart milk
1 quart chicken or veggie broth
Salt, white pepper, and nutmeg to taste



Chop veggies fairly small and into relatively equal sizes. Heat oil in large soup pot, add veggies, and sauté until onions are soft. Potatoes and celery may still be firm — that's OK. Add milk and broth, and simmer until all vegetables are really soft, even mushy. Puree in blender, about 2 cups at a time. Now here's the tricky part — you have to decide how creamy you want this stuff, or how lean, or how strongly flavored. You might want more liquid but richer soup, so add some 1/2 & 1/2 or cream. You might want thicker, so add flour or cornstarch (dissolve in water or broth first to prevent lumps). You might want some traditional roux — equal amounts of butter and flour cooked together into a loose paste.

Once you've figured out exactly how you like this base, you can use it a dozen different ways. Add chunks of baked potatoes, crumbled bacon, and shredded cheese, and garnish with sour cream and chives — loaded baked potato soup. Add clams, diced carrots & potatoes — clam chowder. You get the idea. Write down how you made the base if you like it so you can reproduce, keeping in mind that different potatoes have different amounts of starch, so the texture may vary. Oh, and don't forget that cauliflower trick on page 20!



Save chicken and turkey bones in the freezer. Make your own stock with the bones, onion, carrot, and celery scraps (don't use celery leaves, though — they make stock bitter). Simmer a couple of hours, strain, then cook down to half volume. Freeze in ice cube trays for later use.

Red Onion Salad

This is the one where you use that raw onion trick of soaking slices in ice water (see beginning of soup & salad section). Unless you like really pungent onions. Or seeing your family get all teary-eyed. You can also toss the slices in salt, let rest to release some of the juices, then rinse thoroughly. These ingredients are traditional in Chile and Peru, but vary any way you like. I think balsamic vinegar instead of lemon juice is awesome.

2 large red onions
1/2 bunch cilantro
Lemon juice
Olive oil
Salt



Slice onions in half, stem-to-tip, then slice very thin into half-circles. A mandolin is ideal for this. Salt or soak onions as you see fit. Meanwhile, mince (or puree in food processor) the cilantro. Add lemon juice or vinegar and olive oil. Season to taste — don't be afraid to try sugar, dill, lime, whatever. Pour dressing onto onions and serve, or let marinate for a while.

If you don't care for this all on its own, trying stuffing an avocado half with it, or adding to sliced tomatoes & cucumbers.

Appetizers & Snacks

Having friends hang out at your place is a lot of fun, but it can get expensive really fast. Solve that problem by letting people know you expect them to contribute something whenever they drop in. They might show up with a six pack or even a roll of paper towels, but that's better than you having to buy everything.

Bloomin' Onion Bread

Now, this recipe doesn't have nearly enough onion in it to be part of this book, but I didn't want to include that artery-clogging bloomin' onion you can order at Chili's or Outback. You can always sauté some minced onion in the butter for this. Or use a loaf of home-made onion bread!

- 1 unsliced round loaf sourdough bread
- 12-16 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, thinly sliced or shredded
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1/2 cup finely diced green onion (or any onion)
- 2 teaspoons poppy seeds (optional)

Using a long, serrated knife, cut the bread in a grid, without cutting through the bottom crust. It's OK if it doesn't come out perfectly. Place on a foil-lined baking sheet. Insert cheese between cuts. Stir together butter, onion, and poppy seeds. Drizzle over bread. Wrap the foil around it, leaving it on the baking sheet. Bake at 350F for 15 minutes. Unwrap the bread and bake about 10 more minutes, or until cheese is melted.



Hot Onion Cheese Dip

- 2 large sweet onions, finely chopped
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup mayonnaise



Mix onion, cheeses, & mayonnaise in a small oven-proof bowl or casserole. Bake at 350F until cheese is melted & bubbly, about 20 minutes. Serve hot. Don't like mayonnaise? Use half a can of cream of celery soup.

Try caramelizing the onions first. Add bacon! Garnish with chopped green onions. Serve in a bread bowl — heck, BAKE in a bread bowl!

Mushroom Turnovers

We used to jokingly call these barca-loungers, because they would often pop open during baking. You have to seal the edges really well.



- 1 package frozen puff pastry sheets
- 1 pound wild mushrooms, or mix of wild and white
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter
- 1 cup white wine
- Salt, pepper, and fresh herbs to taste

Put the package of pastry in the refrigerator overnight to thaw. Mince the mushrooms and onion very small. Pulsing in the food processor works, but be careful not to let the mixture get mushy — you want a little texture left.

Heat the butter in a heavy skillet. Add the mushroom mixture and sauté several minutes. Add the wine, a little at a time, letting the liquid cook down in between additions. When finished, all liquid will be absorbed or cooked away. Taste at this point, and add seasonings. Keep in mind that the pastry flavor is light, so you want the filling flavor to be on the intense side, but don't overwhelm the mushrooms.

Unroll pastry onto a very lightly floured surface. Cut into rectangles about 4" long and 2" wide. Brush beaten egg around the edges. Place a teaspoonful of filling on one side of each piece. Fold over and press closed. Use a fork around the edges for a tighter seal and pretty texture. Brush tops with beaten egg. Bake at 400 for about 12 minutes, or until pastry is a dark golden brown. Serve hot or warm.



Baked Brie with Sweet Onions

- 1 whole small wheel of Brie, about 2 pounds
- 2– 3 large sweet onions (Vidalia, Walla Walla, etc.)
- 1/2 stick butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 herb of choice — thyme, rosemary, etc.
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup vinegar or dry wine

Trim the rind off just the top of the brie (or leave on if you like). Place brie in an oven-proof dish slightly larger than the cheese. Preheat oven to 350. Cut the onions into quarters and then thin slices. Melt the butter in a heavy skillet. Add the onions and cook, over medium-high heat, until edges start to brown. Reduce heat to low, add sugar, garlic, and herb, and continue cooking, stirring often, until onions are a dark caramel color. Stir in vinegar. Spoon onion mixture over cheese and place in the oven. Bake for 10-15 minutes. Serve warm with baguette slices and apple wedges. Also good with crackers and vegetable crudité.



Onion Rings

I must have been about 6 years old. We had recently moved from a San Francisco apartment to a San Jose tract house. We had a tree! Our neighbor came out one afternoon with a big plate full of onion rings she'd just made. For no reason! I thought that was the coolest thing anybody had ever done, and have loved onion rings ever since. I'm not into deep frying, but a heavy skillet and about an inch of oil works just fine.



This is so simple, I can't even write a recipe. Cut your onions equatorially (in rings, that is), and separate the rings. Coat them. Fry them. Salt them. Eat them. Home-made ones come out so much lighter and better than those nasty fast-food options — some of those don't even have actual rings of onions in them!

Coating can be a simple batter of flour and water. Or flour and beer. Or that left-over pancake batter. Or a dredging in flour, then egg, then dry bread crumbs. One recipe calls for 1 1/4 cups flour mixed with a teaspoon each of baking powder and salt. You dredge the onions in that, then add an egg beaten with 1/2 cup milk to the flour and dip the dredged rings in the batter. Then coat with bread crumbs or crushed corn flakes.



Fry in a single layer in 350-370F oil for about 2 minutes. Flip and cook another minute or two, or until nicely browned. Drain on paper towels. Add salt to taste. Eat them right now. All of them!

Onion Tartlets

I've done these a number of ways, depending on what I have on hand and how hard I'm willing to work. These are my favorite two. I'd love to know yours.

Caramelized Onions in Crisp Shells

Place a raw wonton wrapper in each well of a non-stick or sprayed cupcake pan. Bake at 350 for about 5 minutes, or until shells are crisp and light golden brown. Remove from pans to cool. Cook chopped onions in butter until very soft. Add a little wine if you like, and continue cooking until liquid is gone and mixture turns a dark golden brown. Add a small sprinkle of sugar while still wet if you want a sweeter caramel flavor. Remove from heat and add a splash of balsamic vinegar. Taste and season as desired. Just before serving, spoon onions into shells. Best served warm. The ones pictured have a little feta and minced green onion on top.



Mini-Quiche-Style Tartlets

Press pate brisee (pie crust dough) circles into muffin pans. Mini and standard sizes work equally well—just cut your circles to a size that reaches 2/3 of the way up the sides of each well. Sauté chopped or very thinly sliced onions in butter until completely cooked and just starting to brown. Place a spoonful of onions in each crust. Beat 3 eggs with 1 cup 1/2 & 1/2 and a little salt & pepper. Pour egg mixture over onions, being careful not to fill past the edge of the pastry. Bake at 350 for at least 15 minutes, or more depending on size, until custard is completely set.





Curled Green Onions: For a fresh and pretty garnish, cut stems off green onions and cut to about a 6" length. Carefully slice through the green leaves several times lengthwise, leaving the white part intact. Cover the onions with cold water and refrigerate overnight. This technique works with celery, too.

Groaner Alert



So these two onions are walking down the street, when all of a sudden a big, heavy truck comes barreling around the corner and hits one of them. The other onion called 911 and the EMTs rushed the injured onion to the hospital, with his friend in tow. Surgery was performed

immediately. Finally, a doctor came out to the waiting room and talked to the other onion. "Well," he said, "I have good news and bad news. The good news is your friend is going to live. The bad news is that he'll be a vegetable for the rest of his life."



ENTREES

Now we're at the part of this book that got me all excited in the first place. Dinner. What the heck do you make when you're just kind of sick of everything you usually make? Home cooking is so much easier than professional cooking, because you can make recipes different every time. You can make them up on the spot based on what you have on hand.

So take an onion, and let's get cooking!

How to Chop Onions

Cut the stem end off the onion, leaving the root end intact. Cut the onion in half, through the root and stem ends. Remove skin, or just pull it back over the root.

Make parallel slices from stem to root ends, being careful not to slice all the way through to the root. This minimizes those tear-inducing enzymes and holds the onion together for easier chopping.

Now turn the onion 1/4 turn. (Always turn the food, not your body.) Slice equatorially, as if you were slicing into rings.

Be sure to curl the fingers of the hand holding the onion — a cut to a curled finger will only scrape the knuckle, not slice through a whole fingertip! Or better yet, if you've peeled the skin back over the root, use that as a handy handle.



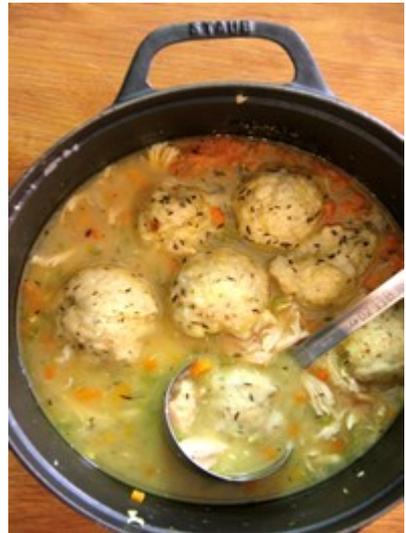
Chicken & Poultry Entrees

Poultry is pretty much interchangeable. See a great deal on ground turkey? Use that. Have some boneless skinless chicken breasts with a little freezer burn? Use them in one of these. Freezer burn isn't harmful. It just isn't pretty.

Chicken & Dumplings

- 1 whole chicken, or 4 boneless skinless breasts
- 2 quarts chicken broth or water
- 2 onions
- 5-6 carrots
- 4-5 stalks celery
- 3 cloves garlic, or a good spoonful of minced from a jar
- 1 tablespoon Italian herbs or any herb
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup butter
- Salt & pepper to taste

Cook chicken in broth or water at a low simmer until done (time varies). Remove chicken from liquid and allow to cool. Chop onions, carrots, and celery, and add to cooking liquid. If you used water, you might want to throw in a few bouillon cubes. Add garlic and herbs. Stir flour and butter together, melted or not, and add to simmering broth. Cut up chicken into bite-size pieces and return to pot. Cook, stirring occasionally, until veggies are tender. Throw in some extra veggies if you're so inclined — broccoli is always good, or a bag of frozen peas, or whatever.



Dumplings can be canned refrigerated biscuit dough, or Bisquick and milk, or home-made biscuit dough, or even corn bread or other quick-bread dough. Spoon it onto simmering stew, cover, and steam for about 15 minutes or until dough is cooked through. There's no rule as to dumpling: stew ratio. We like to go heavy on the dumplings here, but if you add too much, they'll all stick together. Your call.

Chicken Noodle Casserole

Same idea as the old tuna casserole from half a century ago, just not quite as dated.

- 1 medium onion
- 2-3 carrots
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 quart broth
(or water plus bouillon)
- 1/2 pound wide egg noodles,
cooked
- 1 pound cooked chicken meat
- 1 pound frozen peas, broccoli, or other veggies of choice
- Herbs, salt, and pepper to taste
- 1 cup grated cheese and/or
1 cup bread crumbs or crushed corn flakes



Chop the onion and carrots fairly small. Sauté in the olive oil until soft. Stir in flour. Add broth, bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer for at least 5 minutes to completely cook the flour. Stir in noodles, chicken, and veggies. Season to taste. Transfer to an oven-safe casserole. Top with cheese or crumbs or whatever. Bake until heated through and top starts to brown — about 20 minutes, longer if refrigerated.

Chicken Pot Pie

Sometimes I think I'm making chicken & dumplings, and I end up with a pie, or vice versa. Although they're similar, this filling is a lot less saucy, so wedges of pie will hold together reasonably well. Definitely mess around with this recipe!

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion
- 3-4 carrots
- 1/2 bunch celery
- 2 medium potatoes
- 3-4 cloves garlic
- 2 teaspoons Italian herb seasoning
- 1 1/2 pounds cooked chicken
- 2 cups peas (I use frozen)
- 2 cans condensed cream of chicken soup
- Pastry for 2 10" crusts*



Heat the oil in a very large skillet or wok. Chop the vegetables into evenly sized pieces (roughly). Add veggies and garlic to oil in pan and sauté on medium high heat for about 5 minutes. Vegetables don't need to be completely cooked. Stir in herbs, chicken, peas, and soup. Line 10" pie pan with 1/2 the pastry. Transfer filling to pie pan. Top with remaining pastry and crimp edges firmly to seal. Cut one or more vent holes in the top. Bake at 400F for about 30 minutes, or until crust is nicely browned and filling is bubbling through vent holes. Let stand 10 minutes before serving for easier cutting.

***Pastry:** *To 2 cups of flour, add 1 1/2 teaspoons salt and 2/3 cup solid fat (butter, margarine, shortening, or lard). Blend with pastry cutter until completely combined and crumbly. Add 2/3 cup ice water and toss very gently just until most of mixture is moistened. Divide in half and roll each portion on a well-floured board. Lard and shortening make the flakiest pastry, but nothing beats the flavor of butter.*

Chicken Tomato Risotto

This one is in the absolute spirit of this book. It was just what we had on hand one night. Vary as needed for your freezer and pantry.

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3 large chicken breasts (about 2 pounds), cut in 1" cubes
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. Italian herb seasoning
- 2 cloves garlic, mashed or minced
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 1 12-oz. can petite diced tomatoes (with liquid)
- 1 ½ cups spaghetti sauce
- ½ cup wine
- ¼ cup parmesan

Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium high heat. Add chicken and onion and sear on all sides (not necessary to cook through). Add salt, herbs, garlic, and rice; cook and stir until evenly combined. Add tomatoes and cook until most of the liquid is absorbed, 5-10 minutes. Add spaghetti sauce and wine. Cook another 15 minutes or until rice is completely cooked, adding more liquid if needed. Remove from heat and stir in parmesan. Serves 4-6.



Note: I would have added mushrooms if I had any. Garnish with fresh grated parmesan if you have some (I didn't). Ooh, throw in some sun-dried tomatoes!

Mexican-Style Chicken Rice Casserole

This one's very popular at our house. It comes out differently every time, so please, just use this as a guide.

- 1 medium onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 can diced green chilies
- Taco seasoning to taste (about 2 tablespoons)
- 2 cups rice
- 4 cups broth or water
- 1-2 pounds chicken, cooked and chopped
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 can black beans
- 2 cups corn
- Grated mild cheddar or jack cheese

Chop the onion and sauté in oil in a large pot. Add chilies, seasoning, rice, and broth. Cover and cook on low for 20-25 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed. Stir everything together in a large casserole or 9x13 baking pan. Top with extra cheese. Bake until heated through.



Great leftovers to add: bell peppers, green onions, that little bit of leftover spaghetti sauce, an over-ripe tomato or two.

Poulet Basquaise (Basque-Style Chicken)

- 1/2 pound sliced bacon
- 1 large onion
- 1 chicken, cut up, or 8 bone-in thighs
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 bulb garlic
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 2-3 fresh ripe tomatoes
- 1/2 cup Madeira or other sweet white wine

Cut the bacon into 1/2" pieces. Heat a roasting pan over high heat. Chop the onion into 1/2" pieces or a little larger. Add the bacon and onion to the hot pan and sauté until the bacon is cooked but not too crispy. Add the remaining ingredients and sauté for a minute or two, until the outside of most of the chicken is seared. Reduce heat to low, cover, and allow to braise for a good hour or more. Serve with rice. Ooh — and fresh basil!



Boneless skinless chicken breasts are wonderfully convenient, but the flavor of chicken on the bone is dramatically better. Usually the two are interchangeable. This is the one recipe where I highly recommend using the whole chicken. The Basque region is known for a smoky paprika that may be hard to find here. Regular paprika is fine, or hot paprika, or whatever. It's just food — it's not rocket surgery.

Turkey & Stuffing Bake

My all-time favorite use of Thanksgiving leftovers.

1 medium onion

3-4 stalks celery

2 tablespoons butter

Extra raisins, apples, nuts, or whatever you like in your stuffing

4 cups leftover stuffing or prepared stuffing from a package

2 pounds +/- sliced cooked turkey

2 cups turkey gravy

1/2 cup bread, cracker, or corn flake crumbs

Chop the onion and celery and sauté in butter. Add other stuffing ingredients of choice. Combine this mixture with leftover stuffing, and spread in a greased 9x13" baking pan. Arrange turkey slices over stuffing. Top with gravy, then crumbs. Bake at 350F until heated through, about 30 minutes.

Try putting the turkey and gravy in first and topping with stuffing. Have some of that green bean casserole left over? Throw that in. And some of those crunchy onion thingies on top! Add some cubed butternut squash. Sprinkle some dried cranberries on top.

This casserole freezes really well — a good way to save some holiday turkey for a time when everybody isn't sick of turkey.



Beef Entrees

Beef and onions were made for each other. I can't imagine any combination of the two that wouldn't be terrific. Try a slice of onion butter on a grilled steak. Smother that hamburger patty in sautéed onions and mushrooms.

Beef Stew

1 large onion
4 pounds stew meat
2 tablespoons olive oil
1-2 tablespoons Montreal
Steak Seasoning
1/2 bunch celery
2 cups broth or water
1 pound carrots
2 pounds potatoes
1 cup wine or water
1/2 cup flour
Salt, pepper, and garlic to taste



Cut the onion in a large dice. Place onion and stew meat in a heated stew pot with the olive oil. Sprinkle Montreal seasoning over all. Sauté on high heat until all edges of meat are lightly browned. Add 2 cups water and celery. Cover and cook on medium low for 1-2 hours. When meat is very tender, add carrots and potatoes. Continue to cook until all vegetables are soft, about another 30 minutes. Stir flour into 2 cups cold water and add to stew. Stir and simmer until thickened. Taste and season.

Want a little green to balance the colors? Add peas or green beans in the last 10 minutes of cooking.

"Mine eyes smell onions: I shall weep anon."

- William Shakespeare (in All's Well that Ends Well)

Broccoli Beef

There is one minor secret to stir-frying beef. Slice it very thin — easier if meat is partially frozen.

- 1 pound round or chuck steak
- 2 Tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 cups or so broccoli florets
- 1 medium onion, quartered and sliced



Cut the meat into very thin, 3" long strips. Stir together the next three ingredients and add the beef, stirring to coat evenly. Heat the oil in a wok on high heat. Add beef and cook, stirring frequently, until done. Remove meat and keep warm. Stir-fry broccoli and onion in wok until tender, about 4-5 minutes. Add meat back to pan along with sauce. Cook until sauce thickens, about 5 minutes. Serve with rice.

- Sauce: 1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup soy sauce
1 teaspoon ginger
1-2 tablespoons brown sugar, to taste

Try using rice vinegar instead of half of the water. Or wine. How about a dash of crushed red peppers? A red bell pepper? A can of sliced water chestnuts? The beauty of stir-fries at home is that you can use what you have. No broccoli? Frozen green beans work well, too.

I can't think of a single beef & onion recipe that isn't equally good or better with mushrooms. Soak dry mushrooms in wine first for extra flavor.

Green Eggs & Hamburger

Basically a frittata with less egg, but renamed to get my kids to eat spinach. Also known as New Joe's Special way back when I was a kid, from a San Francisco restaurant. Mess with the vegetables. Mushrooms are awesome. Try sausage instead of hamburger. Add tomatoes. Whatever.

1/2 to 1 pound lean ground beef
1 yellow onion
3/4 to 1 pound frozen chopped spinach
4-6 eggs
Salt and pepper to taste

Brown meat and chopped onion in large skillet with a lid. Reduce heat to medium. Add spinach and pile meat on and around it. Cover and let cook 3-4 minutes, or until spinach is completely thawed. Add beaten eggs, stir to even out the ingredients. Reduce heat to low, cover, and allow to cook until egg is completely set, about 5 minutes. Season to taste. We always ate this with catsup.

That tomato in the photo is awesome — just sprinkle a little Parmesan on tomato halves and broil them. Great, easy side dish.



Here's a more authentic version of New Joe's Special. Research tells me that New Joe's was an Italian-American restaurant in San Francisco. Long after it closed, another restaurant emerged called Original Joe's, which is quite a tourist attraction. They sell this stuff for almost fifteen bucks!

New Joe's Special

2 tbsp. olive oil

5 cloves garlic, minced

1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped

8 oz. ground chuck

1 (10-oz.) package frozen chopped spinach,
thawed and squeezed dry

8 eggs, lightly beaten

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

¼ cup finely grated Parmesan

Crusty Italian bread, for serving

Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and onion; cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add chuck; cook, stirring, until browned and all moisture evaporates, about 10 minutes. Add spinach; cook until heated through, about 2 minutes. Add eggs; cook until eggs are cooked and mixture is slightly dry, about 4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper; sprinkle with Parmesan. Serve with bread.



Hamburger Gravy

This one is for when there isn't a fresh vegetable in the house, except that ubiquitous onion.

- 1 medium onion
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 tablespoons steak sauce, like A-1
- 1 tablespoon beef bouillon (or 3 bouillon cubes)
- 2 cups water

Chop the onion. Brown the meat and onion in a large skillet until meat is cooked through and onion is tender. Stir together sauce ingredients and add to pan. Cook and stir over medium heat until sauce is thickened, about 5 minutes.

- *Use milk or wine instead of part or all of the water (but not both — it'll curdle).*
- *Add other leftover veggies as desired.*
- *Serve over rice, pasta, mashed potatoes, or biscuits.*
- *For Southern biscuits & gravy, use sausage instead of hamburger, and use all milk in the sauce.*
- *If you don't have steak sauce, add a dash of Worcestershire instead.*
- *The color can be a little bland, especially if using milk. Add a touch of Kitchen Bouquet for a darker brown gravy.*



Trouble falling asleep? Try onions.

There's certainly no science for this nutty-sounding folk remedy, but who knows? Maybe onion vapors contain a sleep-inducing substance that researchers have yet to discover. We'd consider trying this one only as a last resort. Cut up a yellow onion and put it into a canning jar. Screw on the cover and put the jar on your nightstand. If you have trouble falling asleep, or wake up in the middle of the night, open the jar and take a few deep breaths. Then close the jar, lie back, and visualize calming images. With any luck, the next time you open your eyes it will be morning.

Source: RD.com/slideshows/15-harmless-folk-remedies-worth-a-try

Meatloaf

Meatloaf is a lot like stone soup. When folks ask me what goes in it, I say, "What've you got?" So, as with most of my recipes, this is just a starting place. I always make a large batch and freeze half. Cut the quantities in half if you prefer.

- 2 pounds lean ground beef
- 2-3 large sweet onions
- 1 bulb garlic, or 1/4 cup minced
- 1 green bell pepper
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 2 cups dry breadcrumbs
- 1 cup milk or broth
- 4-6 eggs
- 1 tablespoon Italian herb seasoning
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 cup catsup or spaghetti or tomato sauce
- At least 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 2 tablespoons or more Worcestershire sauce



Chop the veggies very small. Stir everything together in a very large bowl. I often resort to using my (clean) hands to get this mixed well. Shape mixture into two or more loaves in a baking pan at least 1" deep. Or wrap loaves in plastic, then foil, for freezing. Bake about an hour at 350F — time varies based on width of loaves. In the last 10-15 minutes, drizzle some catsup over the loaves as garnish, if desired.



Try topping with strips of bacon before cooking, or wrapping a whole loaf in prosciutto. I use a lot of bread and oats to stretch the meat, but feel free to use less filler. Just remember to decrease the liquid proportionately. Some people like to use 3 parts beef and 1 part pork sausage, if adding fat doesn't bother you.

You have to try this one on April Fool's Day— bake your meatloaf in muffin tins, and "frost" with mashed potatoes.



Cut an onion in half and rub the cut side on your BBQ grill. It not only cleans it — it also adds a pinch of extra flavor to your meats.



Pot Roast

A great starting place for the timid cook. Have you ever eaten a bad pot roast? Neither have I.

1 chuck or round roast, 3-4 pounds
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 onions, chopped or sliced
4-6 cloves garlic, minced
1 quart broth (or water and bouillon or onion soup mix)
1/3 cup flour
Salt & pepper to taste



Brown the meat on all sides. Add onions and garlic. Pour liquid on top, cover, and simmer for a couple of hours, or until the meat is fork tender. Dissolve the flour in a little water or butter and add. Cook, stirring, until gravy thickens and mixture has boiled a couple of minutes to cook flour. Season to taste.

So many different ways to do this!

- *Italian Pot Roast — Use spaghetti sauce & diced tomatoes instead of broth, omit the flour, and garnish with Parmesan.*
- *One-Pot Dinner — Add 6 carrots and 4 potatoes (in bite-size pieces) in last half hour of cooking*
- *Crock Pot Roast — Don't even bother to pre-brown meat. Throw everything except the flour into the crockpot. Set on low and allow to cook for 8 hours or so. Drain off liquid, thicken with flour, and return to pot, then season to taste.*
- *Boeuf au Vin — Use red wine instead of the broth. Add sautéed mushrooms before serving.*
- *Southern Pot Roast — Use a can of mushroom soup, a cup of red wine, and 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce in place of 3/4 of the broth.*
- *If you cook a pot roast too long and the meat falls apart in shreds, it's still delicious. Try it on a bun with BBQ sauce.*

Quick Spaghetti Sauce

- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 teaspoons Italian herbs
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon fennel
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 2 beef bouillon cubes
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 can spaghetti sauce



Brown the meat and onions in olive oil over high heat. Reduce heat and add remaining ingredients. Simmer for 10 minutes.

You can make a dozen substitutions here, based on whatever you have on hand. Add mushrooms. Use tomato sauce instead of spaghetti sauce, or a whole bunch of diced tomatoes instead of any sauce. Use leftover pot roast instead of ground meat. Leave out the meat altogether. No rules!



World's Largest Onion

Tony Glover, an English gardener, holds the honor of growing the world's largest onion. Harvested in 2014, the onion weighs in at 18 pounds, 11 ounces, beating the previous record by 10 ounces.

Shepherd's Pie

Although this is traditionally made with lamb, it's also a great way to use up leftovers. I was too much of a food snob to make it until recently, but the family loved it, so it's a new staple.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 pound lean ground beef
- 1 medium onion
- 1 1/2 cups cut carrots
- 1 cup celery slices
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon Italian herbs
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups beef or vegetable broth (or water & bouillon)
- 3 cups mashed potatoes



Heat oil in large skillet. Add hamburger and onion, and cook until meat is completely browned. Add carrots and celery, and continue to sauté about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, herbs, pepper, and salt to taste (probably about a teaspoon). Stir flour into cold broth to prevent lumps, then add to meat mixture. Cover and simmer 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Pour mixture into a 2-quart casserole. Spoon on potatoes to cover as much of the top as possible. Bake at 400F for about 20 minutes, or until completely heated through.

Apparently onions took on dual status in the ancient world. In Egypt, they were highly revered by the poor and eaten extensively along with bread and beer. A small sect of Egyptian priests, however, was forbidden to eat them. Historians are unsure of the reason for this taboo. On the other hand, onions may have been reviled by those in high positions. In India, Brahmins and Jains are also forbidden to eat onions, even today. Presently in France, there is a sect with only a few thousand followers who revere the onion for its immortality and consider it divine.

Skillet Chili

- 1 pound ground beef
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large bell pepper
- 2 cans diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons taco seasoning
- 2 cans kidney or black beans
- 1 can diced green chilies



You already know how to do this. Brown the meat & onions in the oil. Add everything else. Simmer for a few minutes. Adjust seasoning.

- Takes a total of about 15 minutes.
- Easy to cut in half or double.
- Add corn if you feel so inclined.
- Dump into a casserole, top with corn bread batter, and bake for 20 minutes for easy-peasy tamale pie.

I'm going to include my "famous" chili recipe next, but really, unless you love chopping vegetables and need to feed 30 people, the skillet version is just fine.

In Egypt, onions were considered to be an object of worship. The onion symbolized eternity to the Egyptians who buried onions along with their Pharaohs. The Egyptians saw eternal life in the anatomy of the onion because of its circle-within-a-circle structure. Paintings of onions appear on the inner walls of the pyramids and in the tombs of both the Old Kingdom and the New Kingdom.

Source: onions-usa.org



Susie's Serious Chili

5 pounds lean ground beef
5 pounds onions, chopped
1 bunch celery, chopped
1 #10 can cooked cubed beef, or 5 pounds pot roast w/liquid
1 #10 can diced tomatoes or 5 pounds chopped fresh tomatoes
3 pounds diced green chilies
32-36 ounces tomato sauce
2-3 sweet bell peppers, chopped
8-10 jalapenos, chopped
Several other mild chilies—wax, poblano, etc.
6 beef bouillon cubes
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
2 cups molasses
5 bulbs garlic, minced
2 tablespoons Italian herb seasoning
2 tablespoons crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 cup mild red chili powder
2 tablespoons black pepper
2 tablespoons tabasco sauce
1-2 bunches fresh cilantro
Salt and sugar to taste

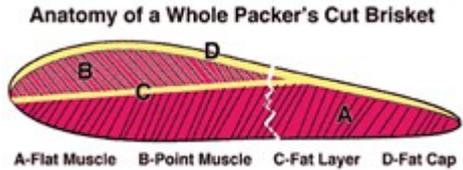


You know the drill — brown the hamburger and onions, add everything else, cook a couple of hours. This is on the spicy side, and a little sweet. No beans! You can serve it over beans if you like. I prefer it over corn bread, with sour cream and shredded cheese on top. I know the recipe is huge, but it freezes really well, so just go for it.

“Smoked” Beef Brisket

Catering in Texas, I got an order for BBQ beef brisket sandwiches. Our apartment didn't include a smoker, so I did what I usually do — winged it. I dare you to taste the difference.

- 1 whole raw brisket of beef
(about 15 pounds)
- 5 pounds onions
- 2 bunches celery
- 4 bulbs garlic
- 1/4 cup liquid smoke
- 1 cup soy sauce



You can trim some of the fat off the meat if you want. You can also cut it into a few pieces for easier handling. I like the dramatic presentation of the whole thing.

Puree the veggies in a food processor. Stir in the liquids. Line a roasting pan with heavy foil (or 2 layers) large enough to wrap around the meat. Place 1/4 of the puree in the bottom of the pan, and place meat, fat side up, on top. Spread remaining puree over top and sides of meat. Wrap the foil around it and seal it tightly. There should be no gaps or tears. Bake in a very slow oven (225) for at least 8 hours — 12 is better.



I made barbecue sauce to go with this, but you can use a bottle. I cooked some of the veggie puree in with the sauce just for giggles. And I did trim off the fat after cooking, before slicing.

The city of Chicago, a region that grew wild onions in abundance, received its name from the Indian word that described the odor of onions.

Spanish Rice

Another great use of ingredients almost always in the house, when there's too much month left at the end of the money and the fresh foods are getting scarce.

- 1 medium onion
- 1 pound ground beef or any leftover meat
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups rice
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 can diced green chilies
- 3 cups broth or water
- 2 tablespoons taco seasoning
- Salt and pepper to taste



Chop the onion and cook with the meat in oil. If using leftover cooked meat, sauté the onion first, then add meat. Stir in rice and cook a couple of minutes, stirring to keep rice from burning. Add tomatoes, chilies, broth, and seasoning. Bring to a full boil, then reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes. Adjust seasonings. Throw some corn and/or black beans in there too, if you have them. And cheese on top!

Healing Powers

Onion's zesty flavor isn't the only thing that makes chopping one worth the tears it elicits: onions contain ingredients that fight colds and flu. The sulfur compounds that make you cry have potent anti-inflammatory properties that relieve cold- and flu-related aches and congestion. And a flavonoid called quercetin, an even more effective congestion buster in onion, works with vitamin C to stabilize the body's histamine-producing, snuffle-causing response to germs. But best of all, the flavonols that give onions their color were shown in a recent Chinese study to help prevent influenza entirely, boosting immunity to three common strains. Source: vegetariantimes.com.

Stuffed Bell Peppers

I find that a whole bell pepper is too much, so I cut them in half vertically, which results in a prettier shape anyway. Although green peppers are traditional, I strongly prefer red ones.

- 1 onion
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup rice
- 2 cups broth or water
- 1 small can tomato paste
- 4 large bell peppers
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 cups or 1 large can spaghetti sauce



Chop the onion small. Sauté onion and meat in oil until meat is completely cooked. Add rice, broth, and tomato paste. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, halve the peppers and remove seeds and membranes. Pour spaghetti sauce into a 9x13" baking dish and arrange pepper halves on top. Taste rice mixture and adjust seasoning, then spoon into peppers. Top with grated cheese if desired. Because cheese.

Stuffed Zucchini

Yes, you can use the same recipe for bell peppers or zucchini, but this one is a little different, just for variety's sake.

- 4 zucchini, halved and hollowed
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 onion
- 1 cup salsa
- 1 cup grated cheese



Cook the meat & onion as usual. Stir in some or all of the salsa and cheese. Spoon into zucchini boats. Bake 20 minutes or so at 350. Garnish with salsa and cheese.

Pork Entrees

We don't eat much pork anymore, so these recipes come from my notes from years ago. If you prefer to let the little piggies live, substitute chicken or turkey.

Chile Verde

This recipe arose out of frequent catering leftovers of pork loin roast with onions and apricots. If your pork doesn't have any apricots stuck to it, no worries; this is equally good without them.

4 pounds lean pork, cubed
2 pounds onions, chopped
1/2 bulb garlic, minced
2 green bell peppers, chopped
2 cups white wine
2 pounds fresh or canned tomatillos, chopped
1 pound canned or fresh mild green chilies, diced
Salt, pepper, and cumin to taste



Place all ingredients in a stew pot or crock pot and cook until meat is very tender. Nothing to it! Plan on two hours on stovetop if meat starts out raw, and 1 1/2 hours if meat is pre-cooked. Although you want a lean cut, don't overspend — the long cooking time will tenderize a tough cut, especially with the acidity of the wine. I like to puree about half of the veggies and cooking liquid and add that back to the pot to thicken, rather than adding any starch.

Onions in School: *Onions are a favorite tool in grade school science classes. They have unusually large cells, and their layers make it easy for students to acquire a thin sample for viewing through a microscope. But onions can also help students learn about math, literature, writing, social studies, and even marketing. What impact do the Shrek movies have on public perception of onions? What role have onions played in American History? Ah, the questions we never think to ask!*

Jambalaya

The word jambalaya is thought to be a combination of French jambon or ham, and a la ya, a reference to the African word for rice. It is traditionally served with rice, but is equally good over pasta or standing alone. The dish originated in Louisiana, where Spanish settlers tried to make paella. Without saffron, they eventually substituted tomatoes. Later French influence and then Caribbean spices changed the dish into a unique recipe, taking advantage of the swamp wildlife, including ducks, crawfish, shrimp, alligator, and other game. I'm not big into alligator, so this is definitely a northwest interpretation. Most of the heat comes from the sausage, but you can substitute mild sausage and add tabasco and crushed red pepper to suit your palate.

- 1/4 pound bacon
- 1 onion
- 4 stalks celery
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1/2 pound Andouille sausage
- 1/2 pound ham
- 1/2 pound cooked chicken
- 1 pound shrimp and/or other shellfish



Cut bacon into 1/2" pieces and fry until done but not too crispy. Add chopped onion and celery. Sauté a couple of minutes, then add spices, bell pepper, and tomatoes. You can let this mixture simmer 20 minutes or 2 hours, but don't add the meat until within 1/2 hour of serving. Add the shellfish in the last 10 minutes. Garnish with cilantro if you like.

Pork Chops with Apples & Onions

Combining apples and onions is classic to the Normandy (meaning north country) style of French cooking. They're known for growing the best apples in France, as well as having a major dairy industry. Calvados (apple liqueur) and Camembert cheese come from Normandy. Try them together!

*4 thick pork chops,
with or without bone
2 tablespoons butter
2 large tart apples
2 medium onions
Salt, pepper, and sugar to taste
1/2 cup cream, if desired*



Brown the chops in butter to get a nice color. Reduce heat and cook just until done. Remove meat from pan and keep it warm. Add sliced apples and onions to the pan drippings, and sauté until lightly browned. Add a dash of sugar if desired, but be sure to keep cooking to caramelize it. Season to taste. Add cream if you like. Serve chops with apple mixture spooned over the tops.



Do apples and onions taste the same? Of course not, but mostly because we use our sense of smell to enhance our sense of taste. Theoretically, if you can't see or smell, an onion can seem like an apple. Conversely, if you can't see, and you bite an apple while someone holds a slice of onion near your nose, you'll swear you bit into an onion. Potatoes, too!

Pork Loin Roast with Onions & Apricots

I made dozens of these with the whole pork loins from Costco. You probably don't need nearly that much — adjust the roast size for your family. Or make lots, and use the leftovers for the chili verde on page 58!

- 1 loin of pork, about 3 pounds
- 1/4 cup minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 1/2 pound dried apricots
- 2 cups white wine

Coat the roast with garlic, salt, and pepper. Place in roasting pan and cook for about 1/2 hour. Meanwhile, simmer onions and apricots in wine. Add the wine mixture to the roasting pan. Cover tightly and cook another 30-40 minutes. Remove about half of the onions, apricots, and wine, and puree them together. Add back to the roasting pan and stir into remaining liquid.



Seafood Entrees

Seafood is tricky, because it needs to be really fresh. I keep tilapia filets in the freezer for quick dinners, but if company is involved, it's totally worth a trip to your local seafood market.

Clam Chowder

In my humble opinion, clam chowder is a special treat that should be very rich, creamy, and flavorful. If you try to make it healthy, you lose too much. So indulge once in a while, and settle for that light cauliflower cream soup on ordinary nights.

- 4 strips bacon
- 1 large onion
- 2 ribs celery
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 large potatoes
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup clam juice
- 1/3 cup flour
- 3 cups light cream
- 16 ounces chopped clams with liquid



Cut the bacon into 1/2" pieces and brown in a hot Dutch oven or soup kettle. Add chopped onion, chopped celery, and minced garlic. Sauté until veggies are soft. Add diced potatoes, broth, and clam juice, and simmer until potatoes are done, about 15 minutes. Stir flour and cream together and add to soup. Return to boil and cook at least 5 minutes more. Keep warm until ready to serve. Add clams and liquid just before serving. Adjust seasoning with white pepper, thyme, and salt, if desired.



This is awesome served in individual sourdough bread bowls, but it's hard to find loaves small enough. Try using wide sourdough rolls instead.

More Onion Trivia: Over 450 semi-truck loads of onions are consumed each day. The average American eats 20 pounds of onions per year. Citizens of Libya eat more than three times that many. There are less than 1,000 onion farmers in the U.S., with an average of 125,000 total acres planted per year.

Deviled Salmon with Caramelized Onions

I first made salmon this way because I had leftover sweet mustard sauce. It was just an experiment, but has become one of my signature recipes.

- 1 whole side of salmon
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
(I prefer light mayo)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 4 cups fresh soft breadcrumbs
- 2 cups caramelized onions
(see pg. 70)



Remove skin and bones from salmon and cut into 6 equal portions (or more if it's a big fish). Combine mustard, mayo, and sugar. Spread or brush mustard mixture onto all sides of each salmon



piece. Make crumbs of fresh or slightly stale bread and coat salmon pieces. Place on greased baking pan and cook at 350 for about twenty minutes. Top with caramelized onions, or plate the onions first and place salmon on top.

Fish Tacos with Mango Avocado Salsa

If you've never eaten fish tacos, quit thinking they're nasty and try these. They're completely different from beef or chicken tacos, and absolutely delicious. I prefer flour tortillas, but corn taco shells are perfectly acceptable.

1 1/2 pound fried fish filets or strips
12 small flour tortillas, warmed
1/2 head iceberg lettuce, shredded
Onion mango salsa (below)



Fish is best if you fry it at home, either battered or with crumb coating. But no one has to know if you buy good quality frozen battered fish filets. Or a healthier option—use baked fish.

Cut hot cooked fish into bite-size pieces. Place about 2 ounces on each tortilla. Top with lettuce and salsa. Eat immediately.

Mango Avocado Salsa

1 red onion
1 mango
1 avocado
2 tablespoons (or more) minced cilantro
Juice of 1 lime



Chop onion, mango, and avocado fairly small, but not so small that it gets mushy. Toss with cilantro and lime juice. Add other herbs or seasonings if you feel so inclined. Use immediately.



Tilapia Skillet

When sister Jennie and I were on a very low-carb diet, this was my favorite dinner. Quick, healthy, and delicious.

4 boneless tilapia filets
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 medium zucchini
1/2 onion
2 –3 ripe tomatoes
Italian herb seasoning, salt, and pepper to taste.

Tilapia can be fresh or frozen. I buy the bag of filets at Costco and always have some on hand. You can cook them straight from the freezer — no need to thaw first.

Heat the oil in a large non-stick skillet and arrange the fish with a little space between pieces. Allow to cook about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, chop all the vegetables to about 1/2" dice. When fish is golden brown on the bottom, flip the pieces. Pile the veggies on top, cover tightly, and allow to steam for about 10 minutes, or until veggies are soft and fish is cooked through. Season to taste and serve immediately.



Vegetarian Entrees

These don't have to be vegetarian, but I wanted to include my friends who don't eat meat. For example, you can make the fettuccini with butter, or better yet, bacon, instead of the oil. The curry can include any meat — we usually make it with chicken.

Fettuccini with Brussels Sprouts, Onions, & Cranberries

1 pound fresh Brussels sprouts
2 tablespoons good olive oil
1 onion, halved and sliced thin
1 cup vegetable broth
1/4 wine
1/2 cranberries
1/2 pound fettuccini (or any pasta)
Salt & pepper to taste
Grated Parmesan cheese for garnish

Put a large pot of water on to boil. In the meantime, trim the sprouts and cut in halves. Heat the oil in a large, flat-bottomed skillet over medium high heat. Place the sprouts in the pan, cut side down. Let cook, without stirring, for about 2 minutes or until bottoms are nicely browned. Add the onion, and continue cooking about 4 minutes or until onion is soft. Add the broth, wine, and cranberries, and cook about 10 minutes or until sprouts are tender. Cook the pasta to desired doneness, usually about 8 minutes. Drain, then add to the skillet. Toss and cook gently for about 2-3 minutes or until any liquid is absorbed. Season to taste. Top with Parmesan.



Quick Curry

Try a few curry pastes to find one you love. Curry powder isn't nearly as good, but will do in a pinch.

- 1 large onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 stalks celery
- 3 carrots
- 1 red bell pepper
- Broccoli, zucchini, or other veggies you like
- 1 pound tofu, if desired
- 2 tablespoons curry paste or powder
- 1 can coconut milk
- 1/2 cup whipping cream, if desired



Cut the onion into quarters, then slices. Heat the oil in a wok or large skillet. Cut the celery, carrots, and bell pepper into bite-size pieces. Add these veggies to the oil and stir-fry on high heat for just a couple of minutes. Add other veggies, tofu, and curry. Reduce heat to medium, cover, and steam for about 5 minutes, or until all vegetables are desired tenderness. Stir in coconut milk, heat just until boiling, and remove from heat. Stir in cream if desired. Adjust seasonings. Serve with couscous or steamed rice.

My friend thinks he's smart, he said onions are the only food that make you cry.

So I threw a coconut at his face.



joyreactor.com

Ratatouille

I don't particularly care for eggplant, so I just use extra zucchini. You do whatever you want.

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 large red onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 eggplant, diced
- 2 zucchini, sliced
- 2 yellow squash, sliced
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2 teaspoons each basil and oregano
or 4 teaspoons Italian herb seasoning
- Salt and black pepper to taste



Heat the oil in a large skillet or wok. Add onion, garlic, and eggplant. Stir-fry until veggies are tender. Add squashes and cook another 5 minutes. Add tomato and seasonings to taste. Cook just until heated through. Serve with rice, pasta, polenta, couscous, quinoa, or whatever you want. Or just eat it. It's good! You can also do this on a shallow pan in the oven for a dryer, roast-ier texture.

The Romans ate onions regularly and carried them on journeys to their provinces in England and Germany. Pliny the Elder, Rome's keen-eyed observer, wrote of Pompeii's onions and cabbages. Before he was overcome and killed by the volcano's heat and



fumes, Pliny the Elder catalogued the Roman beliefs about the efficacy of the onion to cure vision, induce sleep, heal mouth sores, dog bites, toothaches, dysentery, and lumbago.

Source: <http://www.onions-usa.org/>

Zucchini Cakes

You can do this with almost any vegetable, so be brave and try a few. I was going to add a potato pancake recipe, but it's just a variation of this, with potatoes of course.

2 cups zucchini
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup onion
1/2 cup-purpose flour
salt to taste
2 tablespoons oil



Combine everything except the oil. Heat the oil in a large, flat-bottomed skillet. Drop 1/4 portions of batter into pan. Cook about two minutes, flip, and cook another 1-2 minutes or until completely set and lightly browned. These are great with sour cream (but isn't almost everything?).

Hey, try this: Serve the zucchini cakes topped with ratatouille!



Did you know there's a Vidalia onion museum? Yep, in Vidalia, Georgia. Here's what they say about themselves: "Exhibits illuminate the sweet onion's economic, cultural and culinary significance by walking guests through a variety of topics from

when and how Vidalia onions were discovered to where Vidalias can be grown and what makes them so very sweet and special."

I'm pretty sure this is the only museum in the world completely dedicated to onions, but, as Chef Bobby Flay said, "Vidalia onions aren't just the most famous onions in the world; I think they may be the only famous onions in the world."

Side Dishes, Sauces, & Condiments

Caramelized Onions

- 4 large onions
- 2 tablespoon butter
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- Salt to taste
- Balsamic vinegar



No, not that kind of caramel!

Slice or chop the onions however you prefer. Heat the butter in a large skillet. Add the onions and sauté over medium high heat until onions are limp. If onions start to dry out, reduce heat and add a smidge of water. Sprinkle lightly with sugar and salt, and continue cooking until onions are dark brown. You'll probably need to turn heat to low before the mixture starts to caramelize. Stir and scrape bottom of pan only occasionally, to keep the onions from sticking or burning, but allow them time to start browning. It can take up to an hour for caramelization, depending on the temperature. When onions reach the desired color, remove from heat and add a dash of vinegar – this will help lift bits that might be stuck to the pan. Don't over-moisten. These will keep several days in the refrigerator.



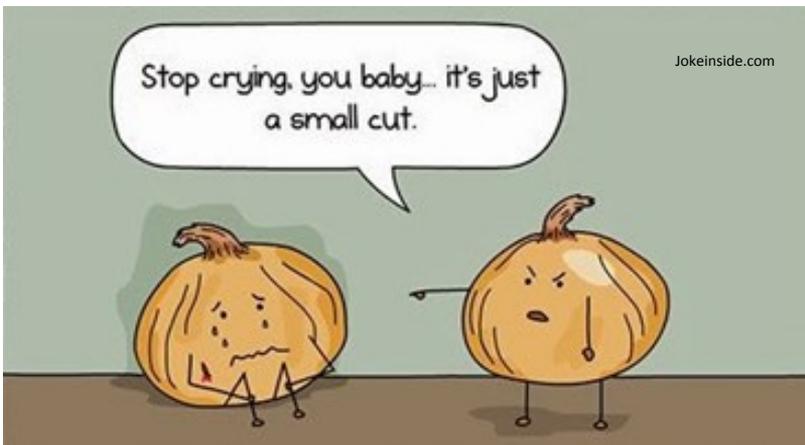
Confetti Rice

Plain old steamed rice is perfectly good, I guess, but gets old after a while. It's almost as easy to add a few ingredients for perked-up color and flavor. I like to chop veggies pretty small so they resemble confetti – you do it however you want.

- 1 medium onion
- 1 medium carrot
- 2 stalks celery
- 2 tablespoons butter or olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Italian herb seasoning
- 1 ½ cups long grain white rice
- 3 cups chicken broth or water
- Salt & pepper to taste



Chop the onion, carrot, and celery to small dice. Heat butter in large saucepan, add vegetables, and saute for about 5 minutes on medium high heat, until onions are fairly soft. Add herbs, rice, and any other veggies you feel like using. (I often throw in a bag of frozen mixed vegetables.) Stir until evenly combined. Add broth. Return to a full boil, then cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 20 minutes or until rice is tender. Season to taste. Toss a little fresh minced parsley, chives, or basil in at the last minute, if you like.



Creamed Pearl Onions

I have to admit that I'm not a huge fan of these, but they have their place. They're good mixed with other veggies like peas, or served in a small crookneck squash that's been hollowed out to make a boat. This recipe adds some bacon and breadcrumbs to offset the onion-i-ness.

2 pounds pearl onions
4 ounces bacon, chopped
1 tablespoon butter
2 small shallots, finely chopped
1 tablespoon minced garlic
2 cups cream
Salt & pepper to taste
1 tablespoon minced chives
3/4 cup dry bread crumbs
1/4 cup grated Parmesan



Clean and trim the onions – this is easiest to do by boiling them in a large pot of water for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, strain, and trim the root ends off. Then pinch each onion to slip it out of its skin.

Sauté the bacon, shallots and garlic in the butter. Drain excess fat and save for later. Add cream and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer until volume reduces by about half. Stir in the onions. Season to taste. Transfer mixture to an oven-safe casserole. Combine bread crumbs, parmesan, and about 1 tablespoon of the reserved fat, and sprinkle mixture over the onions. Bake just until heated through, about 20 minutes. Then switch to Broil and cook 3-4 minutes, just until top browns. Sprinkle with chives.

Onion Bread Pudding

Surprisingly delicious, this is a handy recipe for holidays, when it helps to do most of the work the day before.

- 2 large onions, quartered and sliced thin
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 pound bread
- ½ pound Swiss cheese
- 6 eggs
- 1 ½ quarts milk
- Salt & pepper to taste



Sauté the onions in butter until they are limp. Add sugar and continue cooking until mixture starts to brown. Add vinegar and cook another minute. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Meanwhile, tear the bread into 1" pieces and place in a greased 9x13" baking pan. Grate the cheese and sprinkle over the bread. Arrange the onions on top. Whisk the milk and eggs together, add salt and pepper if desired, and pour over the onions. Press down gently on any bread or onion that isn't completely moistened with egg mixture. Cover and refrigerate for at least an hour, or overnight. Bake at 350F for about an hour, or until custard is completely set.

Try adding whatever herbs you're using in other parts of the meal. Or some chopped spinach and artichoke hearts.

Does anybody in your house eat the end crusts of bread? It's pretty easy to stick those in the freezer, and when you have several ends, you can use them in this recipe or make crumbs.

Potato Onion Gratin

This is fun to do with pearl onions and tiny new potatoes, but it's perfectly fine to use sliced onions and potatoes, rather than going out shopping for more stuff. I hate shopping.

- 1 1/2 pounds new potatoes
- 1 1/2 pounds pearl onions
- 1/2 pound bacon, chopped
- 2 tablespoons cream
- 6 ounces Swiss cheese
- Salt & pepper
- 2 tablespoons parsley
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic

Boil the potatoes in a pot of water for about 10 minutes, or just until tender. Scald the onions, trim off the stem ends, and pinch to slip onions out of their skins.

Fry bacon in large skillet until crispy. Add potatoes, onions, and cream. Salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a casserole and top with cheese. Bake at 400F for about 15 minutes. Combine parsley, crumbs, and garlic. Sprinkle over casserole and bake another 15 minutes.



Roasted Winter Vegetables

1 cup each chopped onion, carrots, butternut squash, potatoes, or whatever vegetables you want to use – turnips, sweet potatoes, bell peppers, pumpkin, stuff like that.

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

Salt and pepper to taste

Cut all the veggies into bite-size pieces or smaller, trying to get relatively uniform sizes for even cooking. Coat a roasting pan or baking sheet with the oil and preheat in a 400F oven. Add the veggies and garlic, and toss to coat evenly. Return to oven and bake for about 30 minutes, stirring once or twice. Everything should be tender and slightly browned.



Try a sweeter blend by including apples, water chestnuts, pecans, etc., and adding some cinnamon & nutmeg in place of the garlic.

Serve these in a cleaned-out pumpkin for a fun presentation. Mini pumpkins can be bowls for individual portions – try brushing inside and out with oil, then roasting them right along with the vegetables. Careful, though – I did have a guest once who ate the veggies and the pumpkin, skin and all. You might want to mention that, although edible, the outside of the pumpkin is best left uneaten. The inside flesh is fair game.



Onion Poppy Seed Bread

Home-made bread was one of our claims to fame back in the ol' Cloud 9 Catering days. We used the same basic recipe with minor changes for onion poppy seed, oatmeal molasses, herb & garlic, and whatever else we could think of that went well with a given menu. Use your imagination!

In this one, I usually used fresh minced onion, but you can reconstitute dry chopped onion (you know, from the spice aisle), in a pinch. Just don't tell me you let yourself run out of onions. I don't want to have to come down there!

3 Tbsp. active dry yeast
2 cups warm water
2 eggs
½ cup oil
2 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. salt
1 medium onion, minced
About 8 cups flour



Dissolve yeast in water and let stand a couple of minutes until it starts to foam. Add all other ingredients except flour. Stir in flour, a cup at a time, until soft dough forms. Turn dough onto well-floured board and knead in more flour until dough is firm. Continue kneading about 5 minutes or until smooth and elastic.

Place dough in greased bowl, and roll over to grease all sides. Cover and let rise until doubled, about an hour. Punch down, divide into two pieces, and shape each into a log about 2.5" by 16". Place side by side, at least 3 inches apart, on paper-lined half-sheet pan (13x18x1). Sprinkle with extra poppy seeds if you like. Cut 3 or 4 diagonal slits 1/4" deep along the top of each loaf to relieve surface tension. Let rise about ½ hour. Bake at 400 for 30-40 minutes.

Try caramelized onions instead sometime. Or part yellow and part green. Or red. Or onions & herbs instead of poppy seeds. Go for it!

Onion Butter 3 Ways

Compound butters may be the easiest upgrade to any meal.

Apple Butter-Style Onion Butter

Peel about 4 pounds of onions, cut in halves or quarters, and place in crock pot with a little water – maybe $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Cover and cook on high for 3-4 hours. Remove lid and continue cooking, stirring once in a while, for at least 12 hours,



and more like 24 hours if you can stand it that long. If you go to sleep during that time, you'll want to put the lid back on and turn the heat to low. Butter is done with the liquid is gone and the mixture is a pretty golden brown. Let it cool, then puree in food processor or blender. Use within a week, or freeze in small batches for later.

Melted Onion Butter

1 shallot

1 leek

3 green onions

1 cup (1/2 pound) butter

Peel and mince the shallot.

Clean and chop the leek and green onions. Place the



butter in a skillet and heat on high, just until melted. Reduce heat to medium-high, and add all 3 onions. Sauté for about 5 minutes, or until onion bits are nicely softened. Serve warm over ... anything!

Onion Butter Log

1 pound butter
¼ cup each minced yellow
onion & minced green
onion



Combine in mixer and whip until light and almost double in volume. Season to taste. Roll into a log and wrap in waxed paper or aluminum foil. Chill. Cut in ½" thick slices to serve.

If desired, roll the chilled log in minced chives or parsley. This makes a really pretty presentation on top of plain grilled steak or chicken breasts.

Be bold and try some other butter logs, usually called compound butters in professional circles. Just whip a pound of butter with any one of the following:

- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup minced dried apricots
- 1/2 cup pesto
- Juice and zest of 1-2 lemons and some capers
- 1/2 cup minced sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons fresh cracked black pepper, then roll in coarse sea salt
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard and a splash of white wine
- 1 whole avocado, mashed, and 1 minced jalapeno

You get the idea. :)



Pickled Onions

Red onions come out the prettiest, but be brave and try other varieties, and let me know how they come out!



- 3/4 cup vinegar
- 1/4 cup water
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 star anise
- 1/4 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 large red onion, sliced thin

This is so easy! Just put everything in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Cool, transfer to a jar with a tight lid, and refrigerate 24 hours before serving. Lasts for several weeks in the fridge.

Grilled Corn & Onion Salsa

Great side on BBQ night.

- 3 ears corn
- 1 sweet onion, cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices
- 1/4 cup minced fresh cilantro
- 1 cup chopped tomato or bell pepper
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper



Grill the corn and onions – corn takes about 20 minutes, and onion takes about 10 minutes. Check often and turn as needed. Slice kernels from corn cobs, and stir everything together. Serve warm or chilled.

The UCLA Folklore Archive contains more than 2,000 records for folk medicinal uses of onion. In addition to coughs, colds, and fevers, onions have been used to treat worms, warts, burns, diphtheria, asthma, pneumonia, and snake bites.

Source: Encyclopedia of Folk Medicine by Gabrielle Hatfield

References

I've tried to acknowledge sources throughout this booklet, but I know I missed several. All the research was done online, and these were the websites I found most helpful.

Images were all retrieved from Google Images. I cited those sites that listed copyright information, but please be aware that all of the photos were copied and pasted – I'm a rotten photographer.

- bearmedicineherbals.com
- books.google.com/books?isbn=1576078744 –
Encyclopedia of Folk Medicine
- britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/.../onion
- gillsonions.com/history
- herballegacy.com
- hubpages.com
- onions-usa.org
- pulptastic.com
- simplyrecipes.com
- vidaliaonion.org
- wikipedia.org/wiki/Onion

INDEX

Baked Brie with Caramelized Onions	31
Basic Potato Salad	17
Beef Stew	43
Bloomin' Onion Bread	28
Broccoli Beef	44
Butter Lettuce and Orange Salad with Red Onions	18
Cabbage Patch Soup	19
Caramelized Onion, Mushroom, and Kale Breakfast Casserole	10
Caramelized Onions	70
Cauliflower "Cream" Soup	20
Chicken & Dumplings	36
Chicken Noodle Casserole	37
Chicken Pot Pie	38
Chicken Soup	21
Chicken Tomato Risotto	39
Chile Verde	58
Clam Chowder	62
Confetti Rice	71
Creamed Pearl Onions	72
Deviled Salmon with Caramelized Onions	63
Farmhouse Breakfast Skillet	11
Fettuccini with Brussels Sprouts, Onions, and Cranberries	66
Fish Tacos with Onion Mango Salsa	64
Four Bean Salad	22
French Onion Soup	23
Green Eggs & Hamburger	47
Grilled Corn & Onion Salsa	81
Hamburger Gravy	47
Hash Brown Casserole	12
Hot Onion Cheese Dip	29
How to Grow	8
How to Purchase	7
Jambalaya	59
Meatloaf	48
Mexican-Style Chicken & Rice	40
Minestrone	25

Mushroom Turnovers	29
New Joe's Special	46
Nutrition Information	9
Onion Bread Pudding	73
Onion Butter 3 Ways	77
Onion Poppy Seed Bread	76
Onion Poppy Seed Scones	13
Onion Quiche	15
Onion Rings	32
Onion Tartlets	33
Pickled Onions	79
Pork Chops with Apples & Onions	60
Pork Loin Roast with Onions & Apricots	61
Pot Roast	50
Potato Onion Gratin	74
Potato Soup Base	27
Poulet Basquaise	41
Quick Curry	67
Quick Spaghetti Sauce	51
Ratatouille (Vegetable Stew)	68
Red Onion Salad	27
Roasted Winter Vegetables	75
Shepherd's Pie	52
Skillet Chili	53
Smoked Beef Brisket	55
Spanish Rice	56
Stuffed Bell Peppers	57
Stuffed Zucchini	57
Susie's Serious Chili	54
Tilapia Skillet	65
Turkey & Stuffing Bake	42
Varieties	6
Word origin	7
Zucchini Cakes	69

Coming in 2015:

Baking in the Real World

From the introduction:

We've all seen those gorgeous glossy books by renowned pastry chefs, you know, with the recipes three pages long and the photos of impossibly perfect confections. Then we bake a layer cake from a mix and try to frost the darn thing and end up with a sort of rounded lump full of cake crumbs. Welcome to the real world.

Here are my recipes and observations for baking at home with normal ingredients and equipment, limited time and money, and absolutely no professional training. I hope they provide you with confidence, courage, and a few laughs.

