

July 2023

ONIONS, A FAMILY OF FLAVORS WITH MANY OPTIONS:

Creamed Winter Squash and Leek Bisque

A Naan Pizza with Shallots

Onion Slaw with Fennel

Onion Soubise with Riced Potatoes

Pickled Onions

**Spiralized Vegetable Salad with Peanut Butter
Dressing**

**White Naan Pizza with Broccoli and Caramelized
Sweet Onions**

I head for the refrigerator to gather vegetables to start my dinner prep. Inevitably, I will choose a member of the onion family. How many kinds of onion do you have in the house? Let's see – red onions, white/yellow/brown, sweet, scallions/spring onions, shallots, leeks, and then there is, of course, garlic. Don't forget the granulated dried onion and garlic on your spice rack and the tiny boiling onions in your freezer and the chives in your herb garden. Maybe you have some of those wonderful Vidalia salad onions in your crisper drawer.

How exciting would my Vegetable *Bourgignon* be without two kinds of onion and that finely chopped garlic clove? [See *recipe archive – January 2023.*] My Cauliflower Salad with Creamy Onion–Romano Cheese Dressing certainly would neither sound nor taste as delicious if it was just Cauliflower Salad with Mayonnaise and sautéed greens without garlic would just be wilted greens. The plants in the onion family add flavor to savory dishes and that's why we consider the Allioideae subfamily members of the Amaryllidaceae family whenever we are creating. The options and the versatility of the onion is another reason we use this common vegetable in our cooking. They can be braised, boiled, fried, deep-fried, grilled, roasted, sautéed, pickled, or eaten raw.

When I was a child, we always thought of onions as part of our winter larder or root cellar vegetables. Spring brought spring onions. I remember well the spring onions sitting in a water glass on our kitchen table in the early spring. Next to the glass sat a salt shaker. A scallion, or a greentail as they were called by mother, with lunch was the joy of that day and nobody even thought about the fact that our winter supply of onions was being depleted. Spring onions or green onions or scallions are simply common onions harvested before they begin to form a bulb. When scallions get a bit sad in the crisper drawer, plant them in your kitchen garden. Your fresh supply can be never ending without a trip into town. If you end up with large, yea huge, scallions in the fall, dig out your leek recipes and then dig out your harvest. They add amazing flavor to soups, stews, and can be braised with grated cheese to celebrate the opportunity you had by just sticking a couple of grocery store scallions into your garden.



Because the cultivated onions we know today descended from a wild onion, onions are one of the oldest vegetables used by *homo sapiens* and early humans. There is evidence that for perhaps more than 7,000 years the common onion has been cultivated, not simply gathered. The wild plant, previously referenced, is extinct but is believed to have evolved in Iran, western Pakistan and/or Central Asia. Domestication most probably began in Central Asia. Their use and cultivation spread all over the world. The explorers and emigrants from Europe found that the onion sets they brought with them were superfluous; onions were already a well-established part of the diet of the those in the New World. In fact, archeological evidence from Bronze Age sites confirms dietary use of the onion as far back as 5,000 BC.

We rarely think of the phytochemicals delivered by pungent onions but, note, they are good for you. Early in our history as a species, onions were incorporated into folk medicine and were even used by physicians who declared their effectiveness in treating headaches, infertility, snakebites, and even hair loss. Today we know that the phytochemicals and flavonoids contained in onions are protective in cardiovascular disease, cancer specifically as they interact with precancerous conditions in the gastrointestinal tract, and with postmenopausal osteoporosis. Inflammation, hyperglycemia, and dyslipidemia are directly targeted by the polyphenol quercetin which is part of the phytochemical inventory in onions. Onions provide significant vitamin C and sulfur-containing compounds needed by the body, obviated by the pungency of which we are all aware.

Culinary and nutritional considerations aside, onions have had other uses through history. The layer upon layer of the bulb formation was viewed with reverence in Ancient Egypt and became a symbol of eternal life. Burial sites reveal that onions were provided for the afterlife. One of the more bizarre reverences for the onion was found in the tomb of Ramesses IV into whose eye sockets onions had been placed before the final funereal wrappings were applied. Ancient Romans equated their pungency with strength and used cut onions to massage muscles. Since you can discourage mosquitos from feasting on your blood by rubbing exposed skin with an onion, I suppose that was an added advantage of the onion muscle massage. Planting members of the onion family amidst your flowers will discourage aphids and cabbage fly and, if you are really prepared for odor that remains for several days or even a week, a natural insecticide spray can be prepared from crushed onion skins and onions. Rubbing a cut onion on your skin is said to relieve the pain of a bee sting. That cut onion can also be used to bring a shine back to cooking pots and it will efficiently remove the rust on a knife blade. If you must leave your car outside and one of those cold, still nights is in the forecast, rub a cut onion over the outside of your car's windshield. The onion lays down a layer that prevents frost from forming on your windshield overnight. If you have open fields around you, as we do, and if you have a problem with grasshoppers during the summer, a fumigant can be prepared from onions and sprayed on your open areas. Grasshoppers do not like onions but they'll chew almost everything else they encounter! Additionally, you may have used the dry, brown onion skins to prepare a dye for Easter eggs before organic, brown eggs were a grocery store staple. Remember, onion skins (brownish-orange) and red cabbage (blue), beets (red), dandelion flower heads (yellow), blueberries and blackberries (bluish-red), cranberries and cherry juice (pink), and fern fronds (green).

CREAMED WINTER SQUASH AND LEEK BISQUE

TPT - 1 hour

The apple and the leeks give this smooth, creamy soup a very special and pleasing flavor. It is not at all the traditional Canadian-style butternut squash soup I knew while growing up in upstate New York.

1 large leek

1 teaspoon *extra virgin* olive oil

1 teaspoon butter

1 small butternut squash (about 1 pound)—peeled, seeded and cubed *or* other winter squash of choice*

1 medium apple—peeled, seeded, and cubed

[An Envy or a Gala apple would be our choice.]

2 cups vegetarian stock of choice

1/4 teaspoon dried sage leaves, crushed

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1/8 teaspoon ground allspice

Pinch salt

1/2 cup light cream *or* half and half

Snipped fresh chives, for garnish

Trim leek, leaving about 2 inch of green leaves. Chop leeks coarsely. Wash in several changes of cold water and, using your fingers, remove all sand and grit. Drain thoroughly.



In a kettle with cover, heat oil and butter over *LOW* heat. When hot, add leeks. Cover and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. The leeks should be soft and transparent *but not browned*.

Add squash and apple cubes, stock, crushed, dried sage, pepper, allspice, and salt. Cook stirring frequently, until squash and apples are soft, about 25 minutes.

Using the electric blender or food processor, fitted with steel knife, purée the soup in batches until *very smooth*. Set a fine sieve over a clean saucepan. Turn puréed soup mixture into the sieve. Discard any remaining vegetables or fruit. Set aside briefly.**

When ready to serve, heat puréed soup mixture over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat until simmering. Stir in cream and allow to heat through. Serve into heated soup plates or into a small soup tureen.

Garnish with snipped fresh chives before serving.

Yields 4 main course servings

Notes: *Butternut squash is available already cubed as a frozen food option in most well-stocked grocery stores.

**We freeze half of the soup base at this point for a future meal and add half of the cream to the remaining base for a meal for two.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.5 g.; FAT = 5.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 12.6 g.;
CALORIES = 121; CALORIES FROM FAT = 37%



A NAAN PIZZA WITH SHALLOTS

TPT - 28 minutes

Commercial pizzas are, let's face it, too much pizza for the two of us and, further, we all know leftover pizza was OK when we were in college but we are a few years beyond those days. Now, we're content with just enough pizza for one meal with no leftovers. Sometimes there just isn't time to make my own pizza crust and a supply of naan is always conveniently in my freezer so why not take advantage of the obvious. By the way, if you haven't added the sweet mild, onion/garlic nuance of shallots to a pizza, you're in for a flavor surprise.



- 1 naan loaf**
- 3 tablespoons well-drained, canned, diced tomatoes**
- 3 tablespoons pasta sauce of choice—homemade or commercially-available**
- 2 large shallots—thinly sliced into rings***
- 3 ounces low-moisture part-skimmed milk mozzarella—thinly sliced**
- 2 teaspoons grated pecorino Romano cheese**

Place **oven tiles or a pizza stone** in the oven. Preheat to 400 degrees F.

Place the *naan* loaf on a square of parchment paper. Spread the diced tomatoes over the bread surface. Spoon the *pasta* sauce over. Using the back of the spoon, spread the sauce evenly over the bread. Scatter the shallot rings over the sauce. Arrange the cheese sliced on top, leaving a border of about 1/2 inch to allow for melting. Sprinkle grated cheese over.

Slide onto *heated* oven tiles or a pizza stone. Bake in preheated 400-degree F. for about 10 minutes. Switch oven setting to **BROIL** and allow pizza to continue cooking until cheese begins to bubble and brown. Remove from oven to a breadboard and allow to cool for about 3 minutes. Slice into four slices.



Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Note: *In Quebec, shallot refers to the scallion; French shallot is used specifically for the bulb we call shallot, the bulb which is said to have originated in the Canaanite city of Ashkelon. This confusing designation is also used in areas of Australia.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 8.2 g.; FAT = 6.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 17.0 g.;
CALORIES = 148; CALORIES FROM FAT = 37%

ONION SLAW WITH FENNEL

TPT - 3 hours and 6 minutes;
1 hour = wilting period;
1 hour = marination period;
1 hour = chilling period

Ever since a grocery store cashier misidentified a bulb of Florence fennel as an onion, I have thought about the possibility of combining fennel and onion in a dramatic fashion. Shazam . . . this is it! Dramatic flavor juxtaposition, yes, but just a very simple vegetable slaw with a simple, effective vinaigrette. We love to pile this slaw on a burger for flavor and crunch . . . Leftovers can be used to top a mixed green salad as a very tasty dressing.

1 1/2 cups *thinly* sliced sweet onion
1 1/2 cups *thinly* sliced Italian red onion
1 large shallot—peeled and *thinly* sliced
2 medium scallions—trimmed and *thinly* sliced

1 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground black pepper-- to taste

1/2 cup *thinly* slivered fennel
1 tablespoon safflower *or* sunflower oil
1/2 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice



In a large plastic container with a tight cover, combine *thinly* sliced sweet onion, Italian red onion, shallot, and scallions, sugar, salt, and pepper. Cover tightly, shake well, and allow to sit at room temperature for 1 hour. Toss gently occasionally to keep onion rings constantly in contact with salt and sugar.

Add *thinly* sliced fennel, oil, and lemon juice. Cover tightly, shake gently, and allow to sit at room temperature for 1 hour. Toss gently and refrigerate for an additional hour. Turn into a serving bowl.

Serve chilled onto chilled salad plates.

Yields 4 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.7 g.; FAT = 3.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.8 g.;
CALORIES = 90; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

ONION *Soubise* WITH RICED POTATOES *Soubise avec Purée de Pomes de Terre*

TPT – 2 hours and 22 minutes

The French braised onion and rice dish known as “soubise” inspired this unusual vegetable dish. Assuredly, this is an unusual technique . . . but there is something rather elegant about this presentation. Accompany with asparagus spears or the thinnest whole green beans and maybe a crisp, bubbling Moscato wine and you have the makings of a very lovely special occasion. My chocolate cake with almond flour [see recipe archives] or a frozen ice cream pie might end the meal perfectly. Happy “whatever” . . .

2 medium onions—*thinly* sliced
1/4 cup butter—*melted*

1 large potato—peeled and chopped
2 quarts *boiling* water

2 tablespoons light cream *or* half and half
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

6 tablespoons shredded *Gruyère* cheese

Preheat oven to 200 degrees F.



In a **5 x 2-inch soufflé dish** combine sliced onions and melted butter. Cover the soufflé dish with aluminum foil. Seal tightly. Put into preheated oven and allow to sweat for 2 hours. At the same time, heat two heat-resistant dinner plates.

Meanwhile, cook chopped potato in *boiling* water over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat for about 15 minutes. Drain. Rice potatoes into a clean saucepan set over *LOW* heat. Add cream, salt, and pepper. Stir to combine well. Allow to reheat.

Spoon *one-half* of the butter-sweated onion slices into the middle of each heated dinner plate.

Spoon *one-half* of riced potatoes over the onions on each plate.

Sprinkle three tablespoonfuls of *Gruyère* cheese over the potatoes on each plate. Return the plates to the 200-degree oven and allow to warm until cheese has melted—about 12 minutes.

Serve hot.

Yields 2 individual servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 10.1 g; FAT = 30.6 g; CARBOHYDRATE = 26.7 g.
CALORIES = 417; CALORIES FROM FAT = 66%



PICKLED ONIONS

TPT - 16 hours and 19 minutes;
8 hours = onion salting period;
8 hours = flavor development period

Onion relishes and onion pickles are frequently used to refresh the palate and allow continued enjoyment of the flavors of a meal. The only problem with most onion pickle recipes is the tedious preparation of pearl onions. Those of you who have observed the creamed onion tradition of holiday meals know what I'm talking about. By the time you have cleaned, scalded, and peeled the onions, you wonder if you will ever have time to complete the rest of the meal. This pickled onion recipe would have thrilled my grandmother who sat, peeling a bucketful of tiny onions, for hours. The convenience of small onions in the freezers of our grocery stores would have saved her preparation time for her mustard pickle too.



1 bag (16-ounces) frozen whole pearl onions —defrosted
2 cups water
2 1/2 tablespoons salt

1/4 teaspoon whole mixed peppercorns—red, white, and black
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
2 bay leaves

1/3 cup sugar
2 cups distilled white vinegar

In a mixing bowl, combine water and salt. Stir until salt is dissolved.

Add defrosted onions. Place a plate on top of the bowl. Set aside for 8 hours, or overnight. Drain.

Sterilize a **1-quart canning jar, lid, and ring.**

Using a slotted spoon, spoon *one-half* of the onions into the sterilized jar.

Scatter *one-half* of peppercorns, *one-half* of the mustard seeds, and 1 bay leaf over.

Spoon the remaining onions into the jar. Scatter the remaining peppercorns, mustard seeds, and bay leaf over.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine sugar and vinegar. Bring to the boil while stirring. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Pour over onions. Wipe the top of the jar with dampened paper toweling. Seal the jar with the lid and ring. Allow to cool to room temperature. Refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.

Refrigerate leftovers.

Yields 1 quart
or about 10 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, sealed in pint jars, and canned using a hot water bath canner. They can then be stored on a shelf in a cool room or basement.



1/10 SERVING – PROTEIN = 0.6 g.; FAT = 0.04 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 12.2 g.;
CALORIES =47; CALORIES FROM FAT = 1%

SPIRALIZED VEGETABLE SALAD WITH PEANUT BUTTER DRESSING

TPT - 17 minutes

Reminiscent of Thai salad combinations we all have encountered with so many flavors and textures and so much nutrition in a single serving. Can you imagine a more perfect summer salad?

PEANUT BUTTER DRESSING:

1/4 cup preservative-free, smooth peanut butter
1/4 cup hot water
1 teaspoon organic lime zest
2 teaspoons light brown sugar
1 teaspoon Bragg liquid aminos
1/4 teaspoon grated fresh garlic
1 drop jalapeño sauce

1 small zucchini—trimmed and well-rinsed
1 medium carrot—pared

1/2 cup shredded radicchio or red cabbage
3 tablespoons slivered red onion

2 ounces soy meat analogue strips—cut into 1/4-inch cubes
1 teaspoon olive oil

In the container of the electric blender, combine peanut butter, *hot* water, lime juice, brown sugar, liquid aminos, grated garlic and *jalapeño* sauce. Blend until thoroughly combined and smooth. Set aside until required.

Using a **spiralizer**, spiralize the zucchini and carrot to about the diameter of spaghetti. Turn into a salad bowl.

Add shredded cabbage and slivered red onion. Toss.

In a small skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine diced soy meat and olive oil. Sauté until lightly browned. Set aside to cool while assembling the salad.

Add two tablespoons of prepared peanut butter dressing to the vegetables in the salad bowl. Toss. Add sautéed soy meat.

Serve at once with more salad dressing on the side.*



Yields 4 servings

Note: *Extra dressing can be saved for another salad, for a stir-fry, or as a dip for *crudités*.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 10.0 g.; FAT = 8.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 9.7 g.;
CALORIES = 158; CALORIES FROM FAT = 49%

WHITE NAAN PIZZA WITH BROCCOLI AND CAMELIZED SWEET ONION

TPT - 34 minutes

Although I make my own pizza dough and sauce and have done so since our daughter was young, I have found the prepared flatbreads especially naan, available in the deli and bakery departments of my local grocery stores, to be a wonderful convenience. When the two of us have written and researched all day and are bone tired, a flatbread pizza with a salad and fruit can be ready before we are too tired to eat. We just set the table, pour the wine, and dinner is ready to serve. The onion jam for this pizza, which takes about twenty minutes, can be made early in the day.



Non-stick lecithin *high heat* spray coating

1 cup *thinly* sliced Vidalia or Mayan Sweet onion
—about 1/4 pound—separated into rings

Non-stick lecithin high-heat spray coating

1/2 teaspoon sugar

Freshly ground mixed peppercorns—red, black, and white
—to taste

2 ounces fresh mozzarella—sliced
2 ounces domestic provolone—sliced

1 naan loaf
1 1/2 tablespoons part-skimmed ricotta cheese
1/4 teaspoon Italian seasoning mix (*Miscuglio di Erbas Italiano*)*
1/2 cup frozen broccoli—defrosted and chopped

3/4 teaspoon grated Parmesan or pecorino Romano cheese

Preheat a **grill pan or skillet** over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat. Coat lightly with the *high heat* cooking spray.

Add onion rings. Spray the onion rings with the *high heat* cooking spray. Toss and spray again. Cook, stirring and turning frequently with a wooden fork, until onions have softened.

Sprinkle sugar over. Toss. Grind pepper over. Toss. Continue cooking and stirring until most of the liquid has evaporated and onions are soft, *being careful not to allow onions to burn*. Set aside until required.

Place **oven tiles or a pizza stone** in the oven. Preheat to 400 degrees F.

In a small bowl, combine the sliced cheeses. Toss and set aside until required.

Spread *ricotta* cheese over the surface of the *naan*. Sprinkle Italian seasoning mixture evenly over. Scatter chopped broccoli evenly over. Distribute the caramelized onions over the surface of the bread. Scatter the sliced *mozzarella-provolone* cheese mixture evenly over the surface. Top with a sprinkling of grated cheese.

Slide onto oven tiles or a pizza stone. Bake in preheated 400-degree F. for about 8 minutes. Switch oven setting to *BROIL* and allow pizza to continue cooking until cheese is melted and top is beginning to brown. Remove from oven and allow to cool for about 3 minutes. Slice into four slices.

Serve at once.

Yields 4 servings



Note: *A recipe for my Italian herb seasoning mixture can be found in the *recipe archives – May 2018*.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 11.1 g.; FAT = 9.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 22.3 g.;
CALORIES = 232; CALORIES FROM FAT = 37%

*A pasta salad would taste very good
with one of the naan pizzas above.*

*Next month I'll share some main course pasta salads
that satisfy on a hot summer evening.*

Drop by; we'll have plenty,

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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