



NO TEARS FOR THESE ALLIUMS

Onions, garlic, and their lesser-known cousins bring a taste of spring to every bite.

By LYNNE S. GOLDMAN

I'm the one who cuts the lawn in my family. That's why I notice those clumps of onion-y smelling grass that are the first to show up in the spring, long before the full, green lawn of summer. Even though these

raggedy clusters make my backyard look messy,

they always make me smile. They remind me that winter is ending, and green edible things will soon appear at my local farmers market—in particular, all kinds of onions and garlic, also known as alliums.

Most onions and garlic are harvested in late spring and summer and laid to dry out until early fall. Many people might not be familiar with the younger, less-seasoned versions—chives, leeks, and scallions, for example—that appear in the spring. They are just as tasty but with more bite, as if to say, “Winter is over! Let’s celebrate!”


Lambertville residents Kate Winslow and Guy Ambrosino write about and photograph food for a living, so they know a thing or two about onions and garlic. Not incidentally, they also co-authored *Onions Etcetera: The Essential Allium Cookbook* (Burgess Lee Press, 2017). “Onions play a big role in the kitchen,” Winslow explains. “They can be so many things. They start out raw and sharp, but as you cook them down, they get sweet. They can add a base note to many dishes or be the star. There aren’t many vegetables that can wear so many hats.”



You'll notice the onion's starring role in cuisines all over the world. The French call it *mirepoix*—a mix of onions, carrots, and celery. In Indian cuisine, it's onion and ginger. In China, the base is scallions, garlic, and ginger. And in Cajun cooking it's called the Holy Trinity—onion, bell pepper, and celery. The combination of onions and garlic, Winslow says, melds seamlessly with other spices. "It unites all the flavors," she says.

In the spring and early summer, go to your local farmers market to find all kinds of alliums. Chives and wild ramps are first up in the season, then garlic scapes (the sprout of the garlic bulb), followed by green (fresh) garlic, leeks, fresh onions, and scallions. Use any of these young alliums in the same way you would their cured versions or search for recipes specific to them. Winslow and Ambrosino's cookbook, *Onions Etcetera: The Essential Allium Cookbook*, includes 130 "supermarket-friendly" recipes such as Chicken with 40 Shallots, Double Onion Tacos or Grits With Scallions and Bacon.

Winslow offers one easy recipe tip when making a stir fry. "I thinly slice a few garlic cloves and fry them in oil until they're crisp," she says. "Then I remove them and use the garlic oil to fry the rest of the dish. When the dish is done, I throw the fried garlic on top. It adds great texture and crunch."

This season try cooking with a new allium—fresh in a salad, grilled, or maybe pickled—and taste spring in every bite. 

Lynne S. Goldman's work has appeared in every issue of River Towns over the last four years. She wrote about the region's plethora of potato varieties in the Winter 2022 issue.

Appalachian Chimichurri Recipe

The Argentinean herb sauce known as chimichurri is traditionally made with parsley and lemon juice, but it's infinitely adaptable by swapping in other green herbs and acids (see below for some other ideas). All summer, we play around with as many combinations as we can think of. The herb sauce that accompanies grilled salmon and spring onions is a variation on the theme and uses the onions' tops. We usually serve this with grilled steak, but it's also wonderful spooned over grilled chicken, lamb, fish or roasted vegetables. This recipe makes about one cup.

- 1 small bunch ramps (about 3 ounces), finely chopped
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt

Combine the ramps, shallots, olive oil, vinegar, red pepper flakes and ½ teaspoon salt in a bowl. Stir everything together and taste; adjust the seasonings as needed. The chimichurri can be made up to 2 hours ahead.

—From *Onions Etcetera: The Essential Allium Cookbook* (Burgess Lee Press, 2017), by Kate Winslow and Guy Ambrosino, of Lambertville.



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