

More about Garlic



As promised last time when I gave you information on how to plant and grow garlic here is more about this wonderful unique little bulb.

If not already on your hierarchy of grocery store staples, garlic should rank high along with milk and bread. It should be in your pantry when you need it, any time of day and year.

But, did you know garlic actually has a season? A couple, actually! When you plant cloves one by one in the fall, they turn into tender green garlic in spring; then curly garlic scapes once school lets out for summer and then finally into the sturdy bulbs we love to smash, slice and mince all year long.

Let me tell you about garlic in each growth form:

GREEN GARLIC is simply young garlic. It looks a lot like a leek or a green onion but has a sweet mellower flavor than your normal garlic clove. You can use the whole thing. As it grows, the bottom begins to round slowly becoming the bulb you are familiar with.

You want stalks that are fully green and fresh, not wilted. Yellow leaves are a signal the plant is close to becoming a bulb and stalks tend to be woodier. Sometimes you can find green garlic at farmer's markets thru May if you are lucky.

GARLIC SCAPES are formed after the green garlic has formed the bulbous bottom before the bulb is ready for harvest. The bulb sends out a long, thin, curly stalk from its center. That is the garlic scape. Scapes only grow on Hardneck varieties. Like green garlic they are tender and fully usable. They normally last the first few weeks of June.

GARLIC BULBS should be ready to be harvested July 4th, that is their magic day. At this point they should be full and covered with their papery skins and ready to be dug up. They will be juicy and full of moisture at this point as they have not been able to dry out yet. Make sure your bulbs feel firm and hefty for their size. Some clusters may be more open than others, thus making it easier to separate cloves.

BLACK GARLIC is a regular head of garlic that's caramelized by heat and humidity in a weeks-long fermentation process. The result" Sweet, soft, and yes, black cloves. You can make your own. There are instructions on the Internet.

Making Garlic Last

Green Garlic - loose plastic or mesh bags in crisper drawer so air can circulate up to 2 weeks

Freshly harvested bulbs - up to 2 months in pantry or dry spot out of direct sunlight.

Supermarket Garlic - up to 1 month or before green sprouts come out

Black Garlic - Store in refrigerator

Do not refrigerate garlic bulbs. Dry, room temperature is perfect out of direct sunlight.

Hope you have enjoyed this two part series on Garlic. Look for more interesting series to come.

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