

Two Onion Farm

Chris & Juli McGuire • 19638 Cottage Inn Road, Belmont, WI 53510
farmer@twoonionfarm.com • (608) 762-5335

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Onions

We give you onions regularly – every week so far this year, every week but one in the 2006 season, and every week but one in 2005. We like onions, onions are essential in a lot of cooking, and onions are our namesake, but we don't often say much about them, so we wanted to give them some of the attention they deserve.

Onions are a time-consuming crop to raise. We transplant the seedlings to the field in mid April – this year we set out about 10,000 plants in an afternoon. After transplanting, the keys to a good onion crop are irrigation and weeding. Irrigation is relatively simple – we need to open the valves once a week and patch the occasional leak. Weeding is difficult – onions are very slow growing and they don't cast much shade, so they compete very poorly with the weeds. In addition, onions are in the field in late spring and early summer, the time of year when the weeds are fiercest and fastest growing. Consequently we need to cultivate, hoe, and/or hand weed the onions four or five times, whereas once or twice is sufficient for most other vegetables. This year we've had great help from our member workers with onion transplanting and weeding.

Generally speaking, onion varieties with mild, juicy bulbs mature early in the season (June or July), and onions with more pungent bulbs mature in August. Early in the season, we give out a lot of fresh onions, which have not yet formed their dry outer layers and which don't store well. By now you're receiving dried, cured onions. These onions were lifted out of the ground when they were mature and beginning to form dry outer layers. We then laid the plants out on racks in a shed to dry further before we cut the tops off and brush

them clean. Curing the onions in the shed after harvest prolongs their storage life and allows us to continue packing them in your boxes through the end of the season.

Harvesting, racking, and unracking the onions are all time consuming tasks because of the number of onions which we're handling, and again we've had spectacular help from member workers this summer.

Those of you who were members in the past may notice that we are giving out fewer onions than in other years. We did not intend this – we planted a similar number of onions per member as in past years. The onions yielded well, but we've had a lot of problems with mold developing on them as they dried in the shed. We suspect that the high humidity during August, while the onions were drying, caused the mold. In any case, we've had to discard many moldy onions. If you've noticed a few onions with black sooty mold under the outer yellow layer, please bear with us – it's not always easy to tell the moldy ones from the unmoldy without actually dissecting them. You can remove the mold easily with a little peeling or washing.

We cook with onions constantly, and we hope they're not difficult for you to use. The yellow storage onions we're distributing now are very pungent, overwhelmingly so if they're eaten raw. However, they have lots of sugars in them and they are very sweet and flavorful when well cooked. They're excellent in all kinds of cooked dishes. Try also cooking them in butter or oil over moderate heat, partly covered, until they've begun to brown and then put them in burgers or sandwiches.

In this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Broccoli	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Cabbage	Yes	Yes	2 wks	Everyone should get cabbage or cauliflower
Carrots	Yes	Yes	2-3 wks	
Cauliflower	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Everyone should get cabbage or cauliflower
Kohlrabi	Yes	Yes	1-2 wks	
Leeks	Yes	Yes	1-2 wks	
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Boston or oakleaf
Winter Squash	No	No	2+ wks	Buttercup type. Full boxes only
Yellow Onion	Yes or No	No	2+ wks	

Sweet & Sour Cabbage

This can be a side dish, or with the optional sausage, a main dish in itself. It's very colorful when made with red cabbage.

- 1 lb pork sausage (optional)
- 2 Tbsp butter or vegetable oil
- ¾ cup chopped onion
- 6 cup thinly sliced cabbage
- ¾ cup apple juice or cider
- ½ tsp salt
- black pepper
- 1 tsp dried dill
- 1 tsp whole fennel seed
- ¼ cup raisins
- 3 Tbsp cider vinegar

If using sausage, brown it in a skillet, and then pour off the fat. Sauté the onion in butter or oil in a deep pot. Add the cabbage and sauté until tender. Add remaining ingredients, along with the optional sausage, and cook on low heat, covered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. The longer the cabbage cooks, the sweeter it will taste. For extra sweetness, you can add a touch of honey at the end if you wish.

Recipes from previous newsletters:

Biweekly members, look at last week's newsletter on our website, for Baked Cauliflower & Macaroni, and a Marinated Vegetable Recipe with broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots.