



# Using, Storing and Preserving Onions



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*Michigan green onions are available June through September.  
The other onions are available August through January.*

## Recommended varieties

*White sweet:* Candy and Walla Walla, Sweet Spanish  
*Red Sweet:* Cabernet  
*Small:* Crystal Wax  
*Varieties for storage:*  
Pontiac and Spartan Banner

## Storage and food safety

Onions for fresh use can be harvested at any time during their growth. Bulb onions store best in cool, dry storage. For dry storage, remove the dry tops to within 1 to 3 inches from the top of the bulb. Remove any loose dirt and trim the roots. Leave the outer protective dry skin in place around the bulb. In cool, dry storage with temperatures between 35 and 55 degrees F and a relative humidity of 50 to 60 percent, the onions should store for 1 to 8 months.

## Yield

1 bunch (5-8) green onions with tops	=	1 cup sliced.
1 small white or yellow onion (3 oz.) chopped.	=	1/3 to 1/2 cup
1 medium white or yellow onion (4-5 oz.) chopped.	=	1/2 to 2/3 cup
2 large white or yellow onions or 3 medium (1 lb.)	=	2 to 2 1/2 cups chopped



## How to preserve

### Freezing

**Preparation:** Choose mature bulbs and clean as though the bulbs were going to be eaten.

Blanch in boiling water whole mature bulbs for 3 to 7 minutes or until the center is heated. Cool immediately, drain and

package. If using a rigid container, leave 1/2 inch headspace. Seal, label and freeze

onions. The onions will be suitable only for cooking.

If chopped onions are to be frozen, they do not need to be blanched. Simply chop the onions into desired amounts, seal, label and freeze in rigid containers or plastic freezer bags. The onions will be suitable only for cooking.

**Green onions:** Young green onions may be chopped for salads and sandwiches and frozen without blanching, but after thawing they will not be crisp and may be slightly tough. Freezing the onions will intensify the flavor.

**Onion rings:** Wash, peel and slice onions. Separate the rings. Blanch in boiling water for 10 to 15 seconds. Cool immediately, drain and coat with flour. Next, dip in milk. Coat the onion rings with a mixture of equal parts cornmeal and pancake mix. Arrange as a single layer on a cookie sheet.

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Freeze. Then pack the rings in layers in rigid containers, using plastic wrap to separate the layers. Seal the containers, label and freeze. To prepare, fry frozen rings in hot oil (375 degrees F) until they are golden brown.

Note: After 3 to 6 months at 0 degrees F, onions tend to lose their flavor.

### Canning

**Food safety tip:** Onions MUST be pressure canned for a specific period of time to avoid the potential of the food-borne illness botulism.

### Hot Pack

Select onions of 1-inch diameter or less. Wash and peel the onions. Cover the onions with boiling water; bring to a boil. Boil the onions for 5 minutes. Pack the hot onions into clean hot jars, leaving 1 inch headspace. If desired, add 1/2 teaspoon of salt to pints, 1 teaspoon of salt to quarts. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process.

Onions are best if consumed within 12 months.

### Recommended process time for onions in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

Jar size	Process time (min.)	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
		0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Pints	40	11	12	13	14
Quarts	40	11	12	13	14

### Recommended process time for onions in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

Jar size	Process time (min.)	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of	
		0 - 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Pints	40	10	15
Quarts	40	10	15

### For pickled onion recipes, see:

*The USDA Complete Home Canning Guide*, 2009 revision.

*So Easy to Preserve*, 2006, bulletin 989, University of Georgia Extension.

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at [msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/mi\\_fresh](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/mi_fresh).

### Sources

How Much Should I Buy? Michigan State University Extension.

*So Easy to Preserve*, 2006, bulletin 989, University of Georgia Extension.

Wisconsin Safe Food Preservation Series, University of Wisconsin Extension.