



Information

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VIDALIA ONIONS HEAD NORTH

Travel up I-95 through South Georgia and you will pass a sleepy Southern town called Vidalia®. Vidalia® is known for growing “America’s favorite sweet onion.” The discovery of Vidalia® onions was actually a fluke. During the 1930s farmers were looking for a new crop to replace cotton and tobacco. They planted onions expecting the typical hot variety and instead they were sweet thanks to the areas mild climate and sandy, low sulfur soil. Today all parts of the U.S. anticipate this seasonal treat which ship out of Georgia the last week of April.

These famous onions are actually grown in 20 counties in South Georgia totaling pounds per year. The University of Georgia has been extensively involved with research on the Vidalia® onion and in the 1980’s the farmers sought state and federal protection of the growing region and the Vidalia® name. Today it is the official state vegetable for Georgia.

One medium Vidalia® onion provides only 60 calories and 16 grams of carbohydrate. Free of fat, cholesterol, and sodium is has 3 grams of fiber, and 200 mg of potassium. You can get them at your local grocery store or can order directly from the farm. To find suppliers see the official website at www.vidaliaonion.com.

Onion should be kept cool and dry during storage. A way to ensure this is to place them in the legs of clean, sheer pantyhose with a knot tied between each one. Hang in a cool, dry, well-ventilated place like your basement.

Here are two recipes to enjoy this sweet, tasty vegetable. For more see the website for gourmet recipes by famous chefs and the winners from their annual “Very Vidalia® recipe test.”

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BAKED WHOLE VIDALIA ONIONS

2 pounds Vidalia onions
1 1/2 cups tomato juice
1/2 cup hot water
2 tablespoons melted unsalted butter
2 tablespoons honey
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons hot water

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 2 quart glass baking dish with vegetable cooking spray. Peel onions. Cut a thin slice off the top and bottom of each onion. Place onions stem side up in the baking dish. Stir together tomato juice, hot water, butter, honey and salt and pour over onions. Place top on baking dish to cover onions and bake for 45 minutes. Remove from oven. Turn onions over and add 2 tablespoons hot water to bottom of baking dish to prevent sauce from sticking or burning. Place onions back in oven, uncovered, and cook for 15-30 minutes until onions are soft when pierced with a fork. Cooking time will vary based on the size of the onions. Serve sauce over onions just before serving.

VIDALIA ONION RINGS

1/2 pounds Vidalia onions
4 cups low fat buttermilk
2 cups sifted all purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground pepper
3 eggs
2 tablespoons canola oil
Peanut oil for deep frying
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 200F. Peel onions. Separate the slices into rings. Place onion rings in bowl and pour buttermilk over onions. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour. Drain onion rings reserving 3/4 cup of buttermilk. Place onion rings on paper towels and pat dry. Shift together flour, salt and pepper. Beat together eggs, reserved buttermilk, and canola oil. Add egg mixture to dry ingredients and stir until smooth. Place peanut oil in electric skillet and heat until 375°F or use a deep fat fryer. Dip onion rings in batter and fry in hot oil for 3-4 minutes until golden brown on both sides. Drain on paper towels and place in oven at 200°F to keep warm. Season with salt and pepper before serving.

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, LDN, is a licensed Registered Dietitian and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences. For more information about the Frederick County Extension Office check out our website <http://Frederick.umd.edu>

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