

Press Release

Sweet Onions vs. Regular Onions

SAN FRANCISCO (January 19, 2006)

If you've never tasted a fresh, sweet onion you're in for a treat. Because they're so sweet and mild (forget the tears), yet still deliver great onion flavor, Oso Sweet onions are something you'll want to keep on hand all the time.

They're Fresher

Sweet onions, sometimes referred to as "short day" onions, because their growing season occurs between the fall and winter with harvest usually in spring/summer, are fresh onions, picked and cured for a short time, then rushed to market. Storage onions, or regular globe onions, are harvested in late summer and fall, stored in warehouses and delivered to markets throughout most of the year. Oso Sweets, from Chile, South America are the first sweet onion of the new year on U.S. market shelves. Perfected in 1989 to take advantage of the rich, volcanic soil, ideal climate, and pure water at the foothills of the Andes Mountains in Chile, they are available January through March.

They're Sweeter

Although there is no official industry standard, it is generally accepted that an onion should contain at least 6% sugar to be in the "sweet" category. Some sweet onions, like the Oso Sweet, have recorded sugar levels of up to 15%. Storage onions usually range from 3%-5% in sugar content.

They're Milder

Unlike sweet onions; regular onions have high levels of sulfur compounds. It's the pyruvic acid in the sulfur that causes tears, harshness, and indigestion. That's why

sweet onions are always grown in soil with low amounts of sulfur. Typically, sweet onions have pyruvic acid levels that measure below 5%; storage onions usually run 10%-13%. Because a sweet onion is also a fresh onion it is very high in water content, which further dilutes the effect of the sulfur and increases mildness.

How a great sweet onion should taste

The best sweet onions deliver a burst of sweetness when bitten into, are incredibly mild, with very little if any sharpness, and have a subtle, fruity flavor. They should still taste like an onion, but be much sweeter and milder.

How to tell in the market whether an onion is sweet

Sweet onions have a thinner, lighter color skin than storage onions and tend to be more fragile. Signs in produce sections usually differentiate between sweet onions and storage onions. Most producers also put stickers on each individual onion, such as "Texas 1015 SuperSweet," "Sweet Imperials," etc. Another indication is price - sweet onions are a premium product that can range anywhere from 79 cents a pound and up.

A little history

Although it seems like sweet onions are a relatively new item, they were first introduced to America around the turn of the century when a retired French soldier brought some onion seeds from Corsica to the Walla Walla region of the Pacific Northwest. But it wasn't until the savvy farmers in Georgia realized what a special thing they had in the Vidalia onion and began spreading the news far and wide that the sweet onion finally got the attention it deserves.

OSO (oh so) Sweet Onions are grown in the Andes Mountains in Chile, where just the right combination of rich, volcanic soil, ideal climate and pure water provides the perfect conditions for growing a "world class," sweet onion. Imported by Saven Corporation, Waterford, Michigan, Oso Sweet Onions are available from January through March in jumbo and colossal sizes in supermarkets and produce markets throughout the U.S. For further media-related information, visit www.sweetonionsource.com.