



Consumer  
newsletter



# Inside Onions

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## December 2024

- Christmas Charcuterie
- Best practices for safe food handling
- Recipe: Tennessee Onions
- Activities for little ones still at home
- Meet a sustainable onion grower - Madison Ranches
- Download our Nature's Ninja play-book filled with onion nutrition information, preparation and cooking tips, and recipes



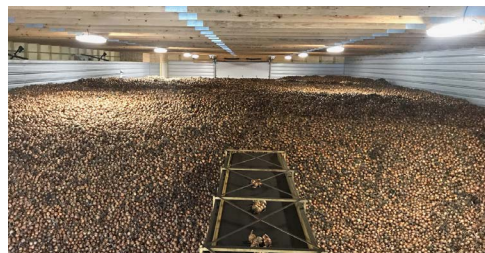
### What Is Nature's Ninja?

It is the onion, a phenom of Mother Nature that deserves higher praise for its stealth, its endurance and its adaptability and sustainability. While its nutrients help you ward off diseases when you eat it, it's also a major action hero, slaying bacteria and bugs in the field just to get to the table. It provides amazing flavor to any meal, and it's useful in other ways such as dying fabrics, curing bee stings, cleaning grills or feeding sheep.



### In Season

Storage onions will harvest this month and be available through May of next year. Storage onions are amazing in that they can last for months in cool storage.



### Available August-May

- Easy to recognize by their multiple layers of thick, darker colored skin
- Commonly lower in water content, they have a longer shelf-life

- Range in flavor from mild to pungent

- \* Best for savory dishes that require longer cooking times or more flavor





## The Onionista

Got a message for the Onionista? Write to  
[onionista@onions-usa.org](mailto:onionista@onions-usa.org)

## Inside Onions

### Message From The Onionista

Who is the Onionista?

Hi! I'm René Hardwick, Aka The Onionista. As The Director Of Public And Industry Relations For The National Onion Association, I Wanted A Fun Way To Connect With People On The Web. That Is How 'Onionista' Was Born. She Is A Fun And Informal Way For Me To Share My Passion For Onions, Food, And Agriculture With Consumers.

In this monthly newsletter, I hope to share with you not only great new recipes and recipe videos, but nutrition nuggets to help round out the menus you serve to your family.

The National Onion Association tells the story of the bulb onion, promoting the usage and visibility of the third most consumed fresh vegetable in the U.S. with active

media relations, recipe development, culinary education and more. Members of NOA rely on the non-profit trade association for

up-to-date information, government representation, industry-wide networking, as well as consumer outreach. Visit [www.onions-usa.org](http://www.onions-usa.org) for more information.

## Need onion info?

The National Onion Association has released its ebook, Nature's Ninja Playbook, a guide for selecting, cutting, and cooking onions, along with handy tips and tasty recipes to include onions in every meal of the day.

The NOA has nicknamed the onion "Nature's Ninja" for the many qualities it possesses to stay fresh and — keep those who eat it healthy. It has 12 vitamins and minerals is naturally fat and cholesterol free.



# NEWS & UPDATES

## BEST USES

for Yellow onions  
Grilled, sautéed, caramelized, baked or roasted.

## Keep the kitchen safe during gatherings

Here's a list of best practices to keep your kitchen safe when handling raw meats and vegetables for your holiday gatherings:

### Before You Start Cooking

Clean Your Workspace

- Sanitize all counters, cutting boards, and utensils before cooking. Use hot, soapy water or a kitchen-safe disinfectant.

Separate Prep Stations

- Designate separate cutting boards and knives for raw meats and vegetables to avoid cross-contamination. Use color-coded tools if possible.

Wash Your Hands

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw meat.

### During Food Preparation

Use Separate Storage Containers

- Keep raw meats and vegetables in different sealed containers in the refrigerator. Store meats on lower shelves to prevent juices from dripping onto other foods.

Cook in Batches

- Prepare raw vegetables first, then move on to meat. This minimizes the risk of cross-contamination if you're short on prep tools.

Avoid Overloading the Sink

- Don't wash raw meat in the sink—it can spread bacteria. Instead, clean and sanitize the sink regularly during food prep.

Use Disposable Towels

- Dry hands and clean up spills with paper towels to avoid spreading bacteria from reusable kitchen towels.

### Cooking and Serving

Cook Meat to Safe Temperatures

- Use a food thermometer to ensure meats reach their recommended internal temperatures (e.g., 165°F for poultry, 145°F for beef, pork, and fish).



Reheat Foods Thoroughly

- If you're cooking ahead of time, ensure reheated dishes reach at least 165°F.

Serve Safely

- Use separate serving utensils for cooked meat and raw vegetables. Keep hot foods hot (above 140°F) and cold foods cold (below 40°F).

### After the Meal

Store Leftovers Promptly

- Refrigerate leftovers within two hours of serving. Use shallow containers for faster cooling.



Deep Clean After Cooking

- Sanitize all cutting boards, utensils, counter tops, and sinks after cooking.

By following these tips, you'll reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses and ensure everyone enjoys a safe, delicious meal!



# Recipe

## Tennessee Onions: A Simple and Delicious Christmas Side Dish

Christmas meals are all about bringing loved ones together with comforting and flavorful dishes, and Tennessee Onions fit the bill perfectly. This creamy, cheesy onion casserole is an easy-to-make side dish that pairs beautifully with ham, turkey, or even prime rib, adding a cozy Southern touch to your holiday spread.

**What Are Tennessee Onions?**

Tennessee Onions are sweet onions baked in a creamy sauce and topped with a blend of cheeses. The dish enhances the natural sweetness of the onions, making it an irresistible option even for those who aren't typically onion fans.



### Ingredients

- 3-4 large sweet onions, sliced and separated
- 1 cup shredded cheese (a mix of mozzarella, cheddar, or Parmesan works well)
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 stick of butter
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: Crushed crackers or breadcrumbs for a crunchy topping

### Directions

- Prep the Onions:** Peel and slice the onions into thick rings. Spread them evenly in a greased baking dish.
- Add the Cream and Butter:** Pour the heavy cream over the onions and dot with butter. Season with salt and pepper (feel free to get creative and use your favorite spices).
- Top with Cheese:** Sprinkle the shredded cheese evenly over the onions.
- Bake:** Cover with foil and bake at 350°F for 30 minutes, then uncover and bake for another 15 minutes until bubbly and golden.
- Serve and Enjoy:** Let the dish rest for a few minutes before serving.



## Ready for some fun kids activities?

There are bound to be times when the little ones need something to do so you can get everything else done!

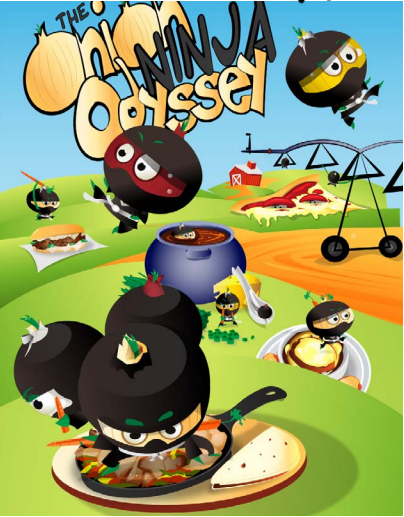
Nature's Ninja to the rescue. The NOA has created this one-of-a-kind, downloadable coloring book, filled with fun pictures and an educational story about farming and friendship.

The Onion Ninja Odyssey is a downloadable coloring book that teaches the nutrition basics of onions while taking readers through a fun journey of how The

Onion – Nature's Ninja has come to be. From the field to your plate, the onion has a wonderful journey that spans the agricultural ages, resulting in a powerful ninja, whose skills keep those who eat it safe, while providing solid nutrition and disease-fighting properties.

The NOA also has a downloadable activities book. But like all action heroes, our ninja has to grow and train to become Nature's Ninja.

[Click here to download activities for pre-schoolers.](#)



## Busy Hands

**Did you know writing by hand makes kids smarter?**

The use of pen and paper gives the brain more 'hooks' to hang your memories on. Writing by hand creates much more activity in the sensorimotor parts of the brain. A lot of senses are activated by pressing the pen on paper, seeing the letters you write and hearing the sound you make while writing. These sense experiences create contact between different parts of the brain and open the brain up for learning. We both learn better and remember better," says professor

Audrey Van der Meer at NTNU. She believes children being should be challenged to draw and write at an early age. Today's digital reality is that typing, tapping and screen time are a big part of children's and adolescents' everyday lives. "Given the development of the last several years, we risk having one or more generations lose the ability to write by hand. Our research and that of others show that this would be a very unfortunate consequence" of increased digital activity, says Meer.





# Blog

## Crafting the Perfect Christmas Charcuterie Board

This holiday season, create a charcuterie board that brings festive flavors and creativity to your table. Featuring delicious dips, fresh slices, and traditional charcuterie offerings, your board will be a hit with guests and a centerpiece of holiday cheer.

### 1. Start with the Base

Choose a wooden board or a festive platter as the foundation. Make sure it's large enough to hold a variety of items but manageable for your space. Adding sprigs of rosemary or holly can lend a festive touch.

### 2. Dips for Variety

Incorporate flavorful dips to enhance your charcuterie board. A creamy onion dip pairs beautifully with crackers and veggies, while a classic hummus adds a smooth and savory element. Place the dips in small bowls and garnish with toppings like olive oil, paprika, or herbs for extra flair.

### 3. Fresh Slices and Crunchy Additions

Include a variety of sliced vegetables like cucumbers, carrots, and bell peppers for freshness and crunch. These are perfect for dipping or pairing with cheeses and cured meats. You can also add thin slices of fruit, like apples or pears, for a sweet contrast.

### 4. Traditional Charcuterie Staples

Build out your board with cured meats, a selection of cheeses, and breadsticks or crackers. Opt for a mix of textures and flavors—soft and creamy cheeses, sharp and tangy options, and savory cured meats. These staples provide the backbone of your charcuterie.

### 5. Finishing Touches

Add festive extras like spiced nuts, dried fruits, or cranberry-studded cheeses to tie everything together. Arrange items in clusters for a visually appealing presentation, alternating colors and textures to keep

## A tasty, nutritious yet beautiful Christmas charcuterie



the board inviting.

A Christmas charcuterie board with dips like onion and hummus alongside traditional offerings is a simple yet festive way to celebrate. Your guests will enjoy the variety and the holiday spirit your board brings to the table!

You can make your own onion dips and hummus, too!

Try this Caramelized Sweet Onion Hummus or Creamy Onion Dip o perfectly complement your meats and veggies:



Creamy Onion Dip



Caramelized Sweet Onion Hummus



## Agriculture and the Rise of Sustainable Energy

The agricultural sector has long met the challenge of environmental responsibility with their careful stewardship of the land. Many farmers also are embracing sustainable energy solutions. Farmers and agricultural enterprises are increasingly adopting practices to enhance productivity while preserving resources for future generations.

Wind energy is gaining traction, with many farms using wind turbines to generate electricity for their operations.

In addition, bioenergy is playing a critical role in sustainable agriculture. By converting organic waste into biogas, farms are creating a closed-loop system that reduces waste while producing energy for heating or machinery. This approach exemplifies how agriculture can innovate to minimize its carbon footprint.

Sustainable energy is also improving water management through solar-powered pumps and advanced irrigation techniques. These systems ensure water is used efficiently, protecting this vital resource.

The integration of renewable energy into agriculture represents more than a cost-saving measure; it is part of a long-term commitment to environmental stewardship. By harnessing sustainable energy, the agricultural industry is not only reducing its environmental impact but also ensuring that farms remain resilient in the face of climate change.

As these practices continue to evolve, they underline a powerful truth: agriculture and sustainability can go hand in hand to support a healthier planet.

## Meet an Onion Grower

The Madison Family from Echo, Oregon, have grown from a 160-acre dryland wheat homestead in 1914 to a diversified and very efficient, irrigated farm. They arm nearly 10,000 irrigated acres growing a veriaty of crops that include Alfalfa hay, Alfalfa seed, Blue grass seed, Canola, Grain Corn for cattle feed, Timothy hay for export, Fresh yellow and red onions, Dehydrator onions, Sweet corn, Buckwheat, and various other forage crops. We lease ground out for Potatoes, Peas, Beans, Rye and Fescue grass seed, and Organics. Meet 4th generation farmers Jake and Heather Madison and their children.



Madison ranches has been on the forefront of

water conservation and innovation for several decades.

Their lack of water supply has forced them to develop highly efficient, and unconventional irrigation practices.

They employ real-time soil moisture probes and weather stations in their fields, and real-time flow meters and pressure gauges on all of their pump stations. This allows us to always ensure that the system is running as efficiently as possible, greatly reducing the ranches demand

on power and squeezing the most production out of every drop of water we pump. Having all this data at our fingertips allows us to make informed decisions on the fly as conditions change.

### Aquifer Storage and Recovery

Madison Ranches conserves water using the patented 3R Valve, which is an Aquifer Storage and Recovery Valve. They are able to store ground water in the deep aquifer for later use during the dry season. This reduces their total water usage and allows them able to run their well pump motors in reverse to create



another form of green energy during the down-hole aquifer injection.

### Wind Energy

Madison Ranches has 18 wind turbines on its farm properties. Helping reduce CO2 emissions and generating power to be sold back to the grid, Madison Ranches is combining Green Technolo-

gy with Agriculture.

### Oregon Trail

Madison Ranches has about four miles of the Oregon Trail that crosses its property. Wagon wheel ruts are visible for about a quarter mile and the family's goal is to keep them preserved.