Garlic

Garlic is native to middle Asia and the Mediterranean region of southern Europe. It is the most pungent of all the members of the onion family. Ancient Egyptians used garlic not only for cooking but also for embalming. Garlic has extensive medicinal properties including fighting infections by boosting the immune system, cancer prevention, and its ability to lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

There are several types of garlic including purple-skinned, elephant garlic, or young or green garlic. Basically, garlic can be broken down into hard-neck garlic with a thick, unbendable center stem; and soft-neck garlic which is the most common supermarket variety. Hard-neck varieties are more cold hardy, have a milder flavor, and are preferred by gourmet chefs.

What to Look for When Purchasing

Choose large, plump bulbs that are compact and have unbroken skin. Squeeze the bulb and if it gives under your fingers don’t buy it.

Storage Tips

Garlic should be stored in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place. Do not refrigerate. Garlic stores well for several months.

Garlic may be purchased in braids that are both decorative and useful.

If you make a garlic butter or garlic oil, be sure to store in the refrigerator to prevent possible botulism poisoning.

Cooking Tips

To peel garlic, place clove flat on a cutting board and lay the flat side of a knife on top, then hit the knife you’re your hand to split the peel. Finely-chopped or crushed garlic will have the most pungent flavor. For a milder taste, roast garlic wrapped tightly in aluminum foil until soft.

Uses

- Roasted whole at 350 degrees for one hour
- Sauté and use in cooking
- Garlic butter
- Mashed potatoes

Nutrition Facts:

Serving Size = 3 cloves raw
- Calories – 13
- Proteins (g) – 0.5
- Carbohydrates (g) – 3
- Fiber (g) – 0.2
- Fat (g) – 0

Garlic’s nutritional value is marginal as it doesn’t contain significant quantities of most vitamins or nutrients. Garlic contains allicin which is being investigated for its possible health benefits.

Garlic is available in late summer and fall.

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