



Garlic

Garlic for all Seasons - Green garlic, Garlic scapes, Fresh Garlic, Cured Garlic

by Lee Davenport

This year I was more excited than ever before for the farmer's market to begin. And it wasn't because I wanted something (anything!) green after a long winter subsisting on roots. It was because I was tired of trying to cook with desiccated garlic cloves that were barely fit for cooking. I never really thought of garlic as having a season before I started shopping at the market. It stores well and is always available so I didn't give it much thought. I wasn't won over right away either. In my more frugal days a buck a head seemed pretty steep so I saved my market dollars for things like strawberries, where I thought the difference between California and local was most noticeable. How wrong I was! Harmony Valley grows a variety of garlic called porcelain and when it is just harvested, with pearly skin and 4 huge cloves per head, in my mind it becomes the garlic against which all others should be measured, though their Hardneck Italian is full-flavored and excellent, as well.

Lucky for us we don't have to hold out for porcelain garlic while eating last year's garlic. Since garlic is planted in the fall, by spring, the plant looks like a skinny leek and can be harvested as "green garlic". All this is, is garlic without the bulb. It

can be used in any recipe calling for garlic and you might even find it preferable because it is milder so the flavor doesn't overstay its welcome in your mouth. Of course, if farmers harvest green garlic, it means those plants won't mature into a bulb of garlic so they must plant enough cloves with the intention of harvesting some green and some fully mature. Toward the end of green garlic season (early June), the bulb is just beginning to form and when you slice through it, you can see the baby garlics inside.

At this point, the garlic plant sends up a scape which is the seed stalk of the plant. Farmers remove this curly tendril thus allowing the plant to use all of its energy in the formation of the bulb. Garlic scapes are beautiful as a garnish but are much more useful when used in recipes calling for garlic. They are excellent in salads, egg dishes, pesto, pasta, etc.

And just when you can't wait any longer, garlic bursts upon the market scene. In the beginning, it is uncured so it is not a good keeper. At Harmony Valley, most of the garlic is harvest goes straight to the hoop house where it is stored in controlled conditions until the skin has turned dry and papery. Then the garlic is ready for longer term storage in a cold, dry cooler. This year, I'm going to buy a big bag so that the wait for farmer's market doesn't seem quite so long!

SPINACH AND SCAPE PESTO

½ bag spinach
½ c. grated parmesan
¼ c. toasted pine nuts
5 to 6 scapes
½ cup olive oil
salt and pepper to taste

Blend until a thick paste forms in blender, food processor or mortar and pestle.

Adjust seasonings and serve with pasta or on bruschetta.



*This recipe comes from **Mediterranean Light** by Martha Rose Schulman. I used to make this soup all the time with plain old garlic. I'm sure it would be even better made with a whole head of porcelain garlic.*

PROVENCAL GARLIC SOUP

5 Cups water
6 large cloves garlic
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. thyme
4 sage leaves
1 bay leaf
1 egg
2 Tbsp. chopped parsley
croutons or ½ c. orzo

Bring water to boil and add the garlic, salt, thyme, sage and bay leaf. (If you are using orzo, add it now) Simmer 10 to 15 mins. Adjust seasonings. Beat the egg in a bowl and ladle in some hot soup. Stir together, then stir back into the soup. Serve at once with parsley (and croutons) as a garnish.



Recipes and information provided by Harmony Valley Farm; its farmers and staff.

For more information go to www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

A Midwestern Palette - Eating With the Seasons

Though many fresh foods are available year round, our regional agricultural community, and the urban communities surrounded by them, benefit when we choose to eat seasonally, from local producers. Knowing the seasonality of our favorite produce allows us to make informed choices.

Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. ~~May~~ June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.

Garlic, in one of its many forms, is available nearly year round from Harmony Valley Farm and other Midwest farmers.

Preparation and Storage Tips

Green Garlic - Store in the crisper drawer in plastic, like you would scallions. The white portion of the stalk and the tender part of the green portion is edible. Slice very thinly for use raw in a salad. Generally it is cooked. It can be grilled, as well.

Garlic Scapes - The pointed end with the seed bulb is the most tender. Depending on its maturity (the fatter the seed bulb, the more mature) the whole stem can be chopped or the portion farthest from the seed end may be discarded, if tough. Use as you would green garlic, but the scape is milder.

Fresh Garlic - The same size as mature garlic, but not "cured." It must be kept refrigerated, and should be used within 7 days. Use as you would cured garlic.

Cured garlic - the familiar, papery skinned bulbs. To use, break apart the head, separating the cloves. Cut off the root end of the clove and the peel will come off easily. If you are going to mince the clove anyway, smash it with the side of your knife and just remove the loosened skin.

ROASTED GARLIC

Roasted garlic is soft and mellow and has many uses. It keeps well, so when you make it, put another head of garlic in the oven so you'll have extra. I like to slice the whole top off, drizzle it with olive oil and roast uncovered in a 350 degree oven until it is soft. Once cooled, the garlic is easy to peel. The easiest way to eat it is smeared on a good loaf of bread but it can also be incorporated in all your favorite recipes that include garlic.

Here's one of my favorite uses for roasted garlic.. Don't even think of making this without a food processor. It'll never be smooth enough.

WHITE BEAN DIP WITH ROASTED GARLIC AND SAGE

2 cups cooked white beans (you *can* use canned but the texture won't be as nice.)

¼ c. olive oil

1 head roasted garlic, peeled

4 to 5 sage leaves, finely chopped

salt to taste

Process until smooth. Serve with bread or veggies for dipping.

Harmony Valley Farm is a family owned farm in western Wisconsin, dedicated to producing high quality, beautifully clean, and deliciously fresh certified organic produce. Our farming methods protect the environment and enhance diversity.