



Nutrition News

Garlic: The Superstar Spice

Rooted in multiple cultures for more than 5,000 years, garlic has had diverse roles: an offering in Egyptian tombs, a performance booster for Greek Olympians, a tool to rally strength for Roman soldiers - and a smelly demon and vampire repellent in many stories. Classical Greek physician Hippocrates and ancient physicians from China, India and Egypt all documented garlic for treating respiratory, digestive and parasitic infections, among other ailments.

Garlic - Usually Best When Cooked

Garlic's pungency can limit eating it as a raw vegetable - but those who can handle raw garlic's effects will swear by it. Cooking garlic makes it mild and savory, and a low-heat roast yields caramelized flavors. However, overly browned garlic can taste bitter, and its low concentrations of water and fructose cause it to burn quickly. In other words, you could run into difficulty if you've sliced your garlic extra-thin - "GoodFellas style," for those of you who've seen the movie.

Unique textures and flavors develop when garlic is smoked, pickled or aged, such as with black garlic, a soft-sticky, jammy and umami-rich ingredient popular in Asian cuisine.

How to Prepare It

To prepare garlic, crack individual cloves with the flat of a knife blade to loosen peels. For larger quantities, put unpeeled cloves from a bulb in a mason jar or small pot, cover with the lid and shake vigorously until skins separate. A garlic crusher or press removes the peel, but may reduce the yield.

Garlic is typically eaten in small quantities, limiting its contribution to recommended daily values of nutrients, but it offers several minerals and vitamins such as manganese, copper, selenium and vitamins C, B6 and thiamin.

Studies on the health benefits of various forms of garlic — including powder, extract and tablets — suggest it may reduce cholesterol, improve blood glucose control, support immunity, improve hypertension and reduce risk of some types of cancer.

The Chemistry of Garlic, And More Prep Tips

The compound allicin found in garlic has antibacterial properties and may deactivate some influenza and rhinoviruses, and limit the formation of select bacterial toxins such as from staphylococcus. Allicin and some other organosulfur compounds available from garlic are temperature sensitive, as is alliinase, which can be destroyed when garlic is heated. Some research indicates a 10-minute wait after crushing garlic and before microwaving or heating allows these beneficial compounds to be formed and partially maintained. Steaming garlic, rather than frying or boiling it, may best preserve polyphenol and flavonoid content.

When purchasing garlic, dried bulbs should be firm, feel heavy for their size and have a tight, dry skin casing with no signs of mold or sprouting. Whole bulbs last one to two months in the pantry at room temperature, one month in the freezer and up to 14 days in the refrigerator. Individual cloves broken from the bulb can last up to 10 days. Freeze bulbs in freezer-grade wrapping or mince cloves and coat in oil (about ½ teaspoon per clove), then freeze on a baking sheet and store in freezer-safe bags for up to a month.

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Garlic: The Superstar Spice (continued)

For food service, large quantities of pre-peeled cloves are available to order in bags and can be prepared in a food processor with a little olive oil. You can also purchase pre-minced garlic in tubs or garlic paste in tubes. Pre-minced garlic may be pasteurized or include preservatives such as phosphoric acid and citric acid.

Garlic stored in oil for too long can be a source of botulism and should be refrigerated and used within four days if homemade, or frozen for later use. However, types that are produced commercially are acidified to help prevent bacterial growth.

For longer-term storage, purchase garlic in flake, granule or powdered form and substitute $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon garlic powder for 1 medium-sized clove.

Tastes Great, And Keeps Vampires Away

Transylvania is a real place, in central Romania. It's associated with vampire stories thanks to Bram Stoker's horror novel *Dracula*. Garlic enters the story thanks to Eastern European stories where garlic was thought to ward off evil spirits. To this day, Romanian farmers will rub garlic paste onto the horns of their cattle, to help fend off any remaining pesky vampires. During religious festivals, tradition-minded locals rub garlic oil on the doors and windows of their homes, barns and chicken coops.

Romania can put in a strong case for being the most garlicky place on earth. Garlic shows up in soups, sausages, toast, and a versatile sauce called *mujdei* made from crushed garlic cloves, water, salt, sunflower oil, cream or yogurt, and eaten with pretty much everything from chicken to seafood to pizza. You'll find the recipe to the right.

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Recipe: Romanian Garlic Sauce (Mujdei)

Ingredients:

3 garlic cloves
5 tablespoons of Greek yogurt (75 grams)
2 small fresh dill branches
1 teaspoon of olive oil
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of salt
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of ground black pepper
Optional: 1 tbsp of lemon juice

Directions:

Clean and crush the garlic cloves. Place in a medium sized bowl and add the oil, salt and pepper. Stir well until it becomes a paste. Add yogurt and mix until all ingredients are combined. Thinly chop the dill and add it to the sauce. Add the lemon juice for freshness, if desired.

Serves 2.