

CWA of NSW Product of the Week

Onions

Who else gets confused by onions? Are red onions Spanish onions? Are Shallots spring onions?

It appears it depends on where you live as to what different onions are called but they are available all year round and grown in Australia.

Onions are cultivated and used around the world. As a food item, they are usually served cooked, as a vegetable or part of a prepared savoury dish, but can also be eaten raw or used to make pickles or chutneys. The onion plant has been grown and selectively bred in cultivation for at least 7000 years.

In Australia we grow several onion varieties.

Brown onions have a brown or yellowish skin and creamy flesh, have a strong flavour and are suitable for cooking. Brown onions are a good general purpose onion, and are the most commonly used onions. Onions should be firm and blemish-free; avoid any that have green shoots. The two most common varieties are the Creamgold grown in the Riverina and the Murray Brown grown in South Australia.

Red onions, which are sometimes incorrectly referred to as Spanish onions have purplish red skin and white flesh tinged with red. These onions tend to be medium to large in size and can have a mild to sweet flavour. After being stored for a short time they can become quite pungent. They can be used raw, grilled or lightly cooked with other foods, or added as colour to salads. Red onions tend to lose their redness when cooked. The Red Emperor and the Redshine are both grown in the Riverina, while the Redwing is grown in South Australia.

White onions are considered to have the strongest flavour. On average the Australian consumer buys less white and more brown and red onions. Several Varieties of white onions are grown in South Australia, Victoria and the Riverina

Spring onions are sometimes referred to as green onions in American cooking and scallions in some Australian states. They are immature onions that are sold when the top is green and the bulb small. Both the bulb and the top can be used. They have a mild flavour and are good in Asian cooking and in salads.

Shallots are an immature onion picked before the bulb has started to form. Sold in bunches they have white bottoms extending up to green tops. Confusingly what are called shallots in NSW are spring onions in some other states, and what are called eschallots in NSW are called shallots in some other states. They are an immature form of spring onion in NSW. The

entire shallot can be used but many recipes specify the bottom section only. Shallots are used in Asian cooking and are good raw including in salads.

Pickling onions are small, immature brown onions that have a white flesh and a sweet and pungent flavour. Pickling onions are perfect for pickling, or can be used in other recipes where onion flavour is desired.

Recipe:

Easy Onion Tart

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 medium red onions, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 200g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 125g feta cheese (optional)
- 1 sheet frozen ready-rolled puff pastry, partially thawed

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 200°C/180°C fan-forced.
2. Heat oil in a heavy-based, ovenproof frying pan over medium-low heat. Cook the onion (stirring) for 10 - 12 minutes or until soft. Add sugar and cook (stirring) for a further 2 - 3 minutes until caramelised. Add tomato, cook (stirring) for a further 2 minutes or until just soft. Top with feta cheese.
3. Trim pastry corners to form a circle. Place pastry over onion mixture, tucking in edges. Bake for 25 - 30 minutes or until golden.
4. Turn out onto a plate. Slice and serve.