

clover food lab

Kiernan here. If there's one thing I love more than beans, it's alliums. (Sadly, there is not yet a quarterly Heirloom Allium Club for me to subscribe to, but a man can dream.)

First off, you might be asking, what ARE alliums? "Allium" is the genus name for all the delicious funky-pungent vegetables that are related to onions. I think of them as One Big Happy Onion Family, even though onions are just the allium most of us are most familiar with. They don't all look like onions, but even the alliums that don't taste straight-onion have clear commonality: a distinct smell that cuts through your kitchen like a knife through a scallion (an allium!)

When cooked, alliums tend to soften up, mellow, and develop rich, sweet, and umami notes. (specifics below.)

Whether raw, sauteed, roasted, or grilled—alliums are the backbone of recipes around the world, and especially across the Clover-verse. Fried leeks crisp-up our breakfast Popover Sandwich, red onion adds just the right crunch and sharpness to The Bridgewater's buttermilk batter and honey Sriracha glaze, and roasted garlic paste creates depth and a touch of caramelized sweetness to our hummus.

Below, a handy chart of common alliums with some simple ways you can incorporate them into your everyday cooking, plus a great recipe from the Clover archives for a favorite from our weekly Taco Box—Pickled Red Onions!

Some of our favorite alliums

Onions

- Lots of varieties, all with different flavor notes
- Yellow onions are most common in the US, but white, sweet, and red are available in most supermarkets and farmers markets
- Slow-cooked onions in a glug of olive oil—go with a nice low temperature over as llllooonnggg a time as you can stand, stirring often enough they don't burn—are one of the best foods on earth



Scallions

- Sometimes called green onions and spring onions in recipes
- Thin and long, without a bulb at the end. The stalks are green and fade into white ends, usually capped with a mess of little white roots
- The greens are usually separated from the whites; cut and discard the roots
- Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt/pepper, roast in a hot oven, and, if you like, add a nice zesty dressing.



Leeks

- Look like thick, giant scallions
- Important to rinse thoroughly—sand and grit get stuck between leeks' layers
- Better cooked than raw. Heat gives leeks a bright earthiness and makes them far easier to chew
- Snip off the roots, trim the thickest of the greens, and half down the center lengthwise. Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper then grill, baby, grill. Once pleasantly charred, finish with a squeeze of lemon juice.



Garlic

- Lots of species of garlic exist, with as many flavor variations, from mild to whoa-boy spicy
- Farmers markets are a pretty much the only place to pick up a variety of garlics to play with
- Most common garlic you'll find in grocery stores is a subspecies called "softneck"
- Raw garlic can be awfully strong, but garlic that's browned slowly over low heat acquires a sweet, nutty, caramel flavor. It's a heck of a ride
- Top trick for adding garlic to soups or stews without getting that garlic bite: slice off the top third of a bulb, exposing the tops of each clove (you can leave the papery skin on.) Brush the tops with olive oil and put in an oven set to 400 degrees. Let roast undisturbed for 40 minutes or until it turns a seductive brown. Remove from oven, let cool, and then squeeze the cloves out of their casing (like toothpaste!) directly into your soup or stew



Shallots

- Look like small, oval-shaped onions, usually with a pinkish skin
- Mellow and sweeter than its allium cousins
- The source of much confusion in many recipes, because most shallot bulbs contain multiple cloves within (like garlic.) Don't sweat it though: shallots are mild enough that a few extra cloves usually aren't a problem
- Use in dressings! Dice shallots and submerge in your favorite vinegar for a few minutes—this helps take any edge off. Then add some olive oil and a good mustard, give a shake, and dress that salad



Chives

- Look like thick grass and, in grocery stores, usually sold in the herb section
- Lightly crunchy with a mild oniony flavor
- Do not keep well over time, so use quickly (More than once I've exceeded the speed limit in the rush to avoid chive wilting)
- Keep raw and chop roughly, then add to soups and salads as a bright green garnish



Ramps

- It's almost mean to write about ramps right now because you can't get them until April (usually)— but it's not that far away!
- Look like thinner, curvier scallions with red midsection (sometimes) and a cute slim little bulb at the bottom
- Peppery and a nearly perfect mid-point between garlic and onion
- They've become a farmer's market staple and a bit of an obsession
- Keep it simple: sauté the greens and add to scrambled eggs, top with a sprinkling of finely chopped ramp whites and midsection reds (sometimes.). Bright and zingy. Eggs are the PERFECT vehicle to taste the pure springy rampiness of it all.



Some extra insights from our friends:

- [Saveur has a fun take on Scallions using a miso-sesame oil.](#)
- [Serious Eats offers some thoughtful guidance on Shallots.](#)
- [Vox covers the obsession around Ramps.](#)

And now, straight from the Clover KIT team....

Pickled Red Onion

1 red onion
1 1/2 cup white vinegar
1 1/2 cup water
1 tsp kosher salt
2 tbsp sugar

1. Remove the top from red onions. Remove the peel. Cut onion in half. Lay one halve down on the cutting board and cut into thin slivers (1/4 inch or smaller). If you're more comfortable dicing the onion, you could do that too. Arrange the onion pieces in a glass jar.

2. Mix together all the other ingredients in a bowl to make a brine, and pour the brine over the onions.

3. If there isn't enough brine, add a dash of vinegar and a few tablespoons of water so that all the onion pieces are covered.

4. Refrigerate for a day and enjoy on sandwiches, tacos, or wherever you need an oniony bite. Will keep, covered in the fridge, for a week or more.

Welcome to the One Big Happy Onion Family!

