

Garlic: A Quick Guidee

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The scientific name for garlic is *Allium Sativum*. It is related to the lily and the onion. Although related to the onion, and having a flavor that very slightly resembles that of an onion, garlic does not bring tears to the eyes when chopped.

When buying fresh garlic, be sure that the head feels very firm when you squeeze it. Over time, garlic will soften and begin to sprout, which turns the garlic bitter. To store fresh garlic, keep it in a dark, cool place, such as the basement. Do not refrigerate or freeze the garlic, as it will begin to loose its taste.

To peel a clove of garlic, place it on a cutting board, and put the flat of the blade of the knife against it. Press down on the other side of the blade with the heel of your hand, flattening the garlic slightly. The skin will come right off.

The strong flavor and odor of garlic come from sulfur compounds within the cells. The more cells that are broken, the stronger the flavor of the garlic will be. For the mildest flavor, just use a whole or slightly crushed clove of garlic. For a bit stronger flavor, slice or chop the garlic, and for the strongest flavor, mash the garlic into a paste.

Cooking garlic tames the strong flavor, and changes it in different ways, depending on how it's cooked. If using in a sauce, it can be sweated or sautéed. In sweating the garlic, it is first chopped finely, and then added to a cold pan with some oil, it is then gently heated, causing the oil to become infused with the garlic flavor. To sauté garlic, heat the oil in the pan first, and then add the chopped garlic, stirring frequently, and being careful not to let the garlic burn and become bitter.

Roasting the garlic softens the flavor, and makes it soft and perfect for mixing with cream cheese to spread onto toast, or just spread on the toast itself.

To roast the garlic, take a whole head of garlic, and remove the papery outer skin. Place the garlic on a piece of aluminum foil, and drizzle with some olive oil. Loosely wrap the garlic in the foil, and place it into a 350 degree oven for 1 hour. Remove the garlic and let it cool. When cool enough to handle, separate the cloves of garlic, and squeeze each one. The flesh should pop right out. The roasted garlic is great mixed with cheese or potatoes, or on its own.

Don't be afraid to use garlic in your cooking. Garlic is flavorful, and healthful, and of course, it will keep those pesky vampires away.

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