

Garlic Sampler

Descriptions of garlic types/varieties

An essential component of cuisines around the world, garlic has attained nearly mythical status among cooks, chefs, foodies and enthusiasts. Worldwide garlic is grown on over 2 million acres and the number continues to increase every year. Garlic has been cultivated for thousands of years and appears to have originated (or first cultivated) in south central Asia.

Garlic is in the onion family (*Allium sativum*). Most feel that there are two subspecies, frequently called softnecks and hardnecks. Hardnecks produce a flower stalk, or scape. Flower stalk is a bit of a misnomer though as garlic produces no fertile flowers or seeds. The “flower” does develop into small aerial cloves. Softnecks do not produce a flower stalk. The clove arrangements within the bulb is different between softnecks and hardnecks. You can often tell if a garlic bulb is a softneck or hardneck by simply squeezing the neck above the bulb. Hardnecks will have a very woody stiff feel. Because of this hardnecks can not be used in the braids of garlic one will sometimes see - these have to be made with softneck types.

Within these two subspecies there are usually considered to be eight to ten “types” based on clove arrangement, clove number, plant growth habit, storage life and flavor. (Some people feel that purple stripe, glazed purple stripe, and marbled purple stripe should be separate “types” while others feel that they should be one type.) Nine of the ten types are included below. Garlic researchers have categorized somewhere between 110 and 235 garlic strains depending on what method of analysis is used. Garlic has been grown around the world and local strains are selected from mutations or individual bulbs that seemed to thrive best in a specific climate. Researchers continue to look for unknown local strains in remote regions around the world.

All of these garlics were grown in Geary County, Kansas. They were harvested and processed in June and July, 2018. Garlic should be stored at cool room temperature and in mesh bags. Never store it in sealed plastic bags or in the refrigerator. Normal refrigerator temperatures are the ideal condition to stimulate cloves to start growing which greatly shortens storage life.

Softnecks

Softnecks are the most commonly grown strains in North America and may be the most productive. Most of the garlic that is found in grocery stores will be softneck varieties. Softnecks are also very popular as they have longer storage life than hardnecks.

Inchelium Red (Artichoke) - Artichoke varieties have 12 - 20 cloves per bulb. Artichokes have several overlapping layers of cloves. Average storage life is 10 months. They generally have some of the mildest flavor or all types which may be another reason that they are so popular. Inchelium Red was discovered on an Indian Reservation in Washington and is routinely rated tops in taste tests. Mild but very full flavored.

Silver White (Silverskin) - Silverskin varieties have 12 to 20 cloves per bulb. Outer cloves tend to be flat and wide while inner cloves tend to be tall, narrow and concave. Average storage life is 10 to 12 months. Flavor is usually described as hot. Silver White is originally from California.

Hardnecks

Beyond having a flower stalk, hardnecks are generalized as having fewer cloves per bulb and thereby larger cloves. Most chefs feel that hardnecks frequently have more robust flavors and are more desirable. But with shorter storage life, these need to be used first! Hardnecks normally have just a single clove layer grouped around the woody stem of the flower stalk.

Ajo Rojo (Creole) - As their name implies, Creole varieties are well adapted to hotter climates but as a result they tend to have smaller bulbs. Some feel that Creoles are actually softnecks that bolt weakly in the heat. Like softnecks they have longer storage life. Creoles usually have 8 to 12 cloves per bulb and a storage life of 10 to 12 months. Flavor is generally spicy sweet. Ajo Rojo is originally from Spain. Flavor is described as creamy when baked but hot when raw.

Armenian (Porcelain) - Porcelains tend to have the fewest cloves per bulb, often just 4 to 6. Storage life is 6 months. Flavors are described as spicy and robust to hot. Armenian is originally from Hadrut, Armenia located in the mountains of southeast Armenia very near the border with Azerbaijan.

Asian Tempest (Asiatic) - Asiatics are known from all over eastern Asia and can be some of the most illusive to find in the trade. They have 4 to 7 bulbs per clove and one of the shortest storage life at 4 months. Flavor of most Asiatics is described as hot! Asian Tempest is originally from South Korea. It is purported to be sweet when baked with good garlic flavor.

Carpathian Mountain (Rocamboles) - Rocamboles are probably the most widely known of the hardneck garlics with more full bodied flavor than most softnecks. Rocamboles have 6 to 11 cloves per bulb and a 4 to 6 month storage life. Flavor is generalized as rich and robust. Carpathian Mountain is from the Carpathian Mountain region of southwest Poland and is strong flavored and spicy.

Chesnok Red (Standard Purple Stripe) - Purple Stripes are named because many cultivars have bright purple streaks and blotches on both the bulbs wrappers and clove skins. Standard Purple Stripes have 8 to 12 cloves per bulb with a 4 to 6 month storage life. Flavor is generalized as full and are strongly preferred for baking. Chesnok Red is from Shvelisi in the Republic of Georgia.

Metechi (Marbled Purple Stripe) - Marbled Purple Stripes tend to have larger bulbs than Standard Purple Stripes with 4 to 7 cloves per bulb average. Storage life is 4 to 6 months. Flavor has been called anywhere from full to fiery. Origin of Metechi is unknown but could be from the Republic of Georgia. Many of the Marbled Purple Stripes have origins from the central to northern Eurasian region.

China Stripe (Turban) - Turbans are likely a sub-variety of Artichokes but with a flower stalk. They have 6 to 8 cloves per bulb and a short storage life at just 4 months. Flavor is best described as hot for most Turban varieties! China Stripe was originally purchased at a market in Beijing, China. It has a milder flavor than many other Turbans.

I hope you enjoy your garlic. If you have any questions, contact Chuck Otte at cotte@ksu.edu