

ADOBE STOCK



# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN GROW PERFECT ONIONS

## BOB DLUZEN

The Detroit News (TNS)

To me, a nicely shaped, good-sized onion bulb is one of the most satisfying vegetables to grow. That may be because during my first years of gardening, I was not able to grow anything that I felt was a decent onion. Compared to other vegetables, onions are moderately difficult to grow so you get a good crop, but it can be easier if a few guidelines are followed.

Onions that form bulbs are called “dry onions.” They come in a wide variety of shapes such as globe, flat, round or torpedo shaped. And they are white, yellow and red with various degrees of pungent flavors.

Onions excel under cool temperatures, therefore are planted as soon as the soil can be worked, ideally in early April. They require full sun; don't let other plants shade them.

Onions need well-drained, fertile, humus-rich soil. They have small shallow roots, so are only able to take up nutrients from a small area. Therefore, thorough soil preparation

is essential. Add 1 inch of composted manure (or about 20 pounds per 100 square feet) to the growing area and work it into the soil. You may also add a couple cups of 12-12-12 fertilizer for every 25 feet of row. If your soil is heavy or not well drained, consider making a raised bed filled with loose soil.

Onions are grown from seeds, sets or pre-grown transplants. Onion seeds must be started indoors in January. Sets are small immature bulbs that were grown last year by set growers and stored until this spring. Transplants are field-grown plants grown in Southern states and shipped here for planting.

Onions have a long growing season, sets and transplants give you a four to six week headstart.

Sets are the easiest way to grow onions. Smaller sets that are less than one-half inch across will not be vigorous, while sets larger than three-quarters of an inch often send up an unwanted seed stalk.

Smooth out your prepared soil and make a furrow an inch

deep. Place the sets in the furrow, pointy end up about four inches apart. Cover with soil so only the tip of the bulb can be seen. Or if your soil is soft enough, just push them into the soil.

Transplants are sold in bunches and look like small green onions with their tops trimmed off. Place them into 1 inch deep furrows and firm the soil around them. Water well immediately.

Onion plants can't compete with weeds. So you must remove the weeds while they're still small. Avoid damaging the onions' shallow roots by not disturbing the soil too deeply.

Onions require 1 inch of water per week by rain or hand watering. If too dry, the bulbs may split into two parts within one bulb.

Once they reach 8 inches tall, sprinkle a half cup of 12-12-12 granular fertilizer per 25 feet of row. Water well.

Onions start forming bulbs according to daylight hours. In our latitude we plant long-day varieties. If you want to grow onions this year, now's the time to get started.

## ON THE MENU

### BREAKFAST BURRITOS

Filled with a zesty mix of scrambled egg, spicy chorizo sausage, crispy tater tots and Mexican cheese, it's a hearty and sublime mix of contrasting textures and flavors. It also includes a zesty sour cream sauce for some smoky heat.

They can be eaten fresh from the skillet, or wrapped in foil or parchment for a breakfast (or lunch) on the go. They also can be wrapped and refrigerated for a post-draft meal.

Don't care for chorizo? Substitute bacon, ham or Italian sausage. Or, go meat-free with black or refried beans. You can also replace the tater tots with pre-cut hash browns.

For a tamer burrito, cut the amount of minced chipotle or sauce in the sour cream or omit it altogether. Don't forget pico de gallo or your favorite salsa for dipping.

#### For chipotle sour cream

- 1/3 cup sour cream
- 1 or 2 chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, minced, plus 1 tablespoon sauce
- Juice from 1/2 lime
- Salt

#### For burritos

- 3 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil, divided
- 2 cups thawed frozen tater tots
- 12 ounces chorizo sausage, casings removed (I used Salvadoran style)
- 8 large eggs, beaten with a little water or milk
- 2 green onions, diced
- 1 cup shredded Mexican-style cheese
- 1/2 cup roasted tomato salsa or pico de gallo, optional

#### ■ 6 10-inch flour tortillas

In small bowl, stir together sour cream, minced chipotle chiles and sauce and lime juice until well blended. Add a pinch of salt, stir and set aside while you prepare the burritos.

Make burritos: In large nonstick skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil until hot and shimmering. Add tater tots to pan in a single layer and, using a spatula, press into bottom of pan to flatten. Cook tots until they are golden brown and crispy, about 2-3 minutes on each side. Transfer to a paper-towel lined plate and set aside while you make the eggs.

Wipe skillet clean with a damp paper towel, bring to medium heat and add chorizo. Cook sausage, breaking it up with a wooden spoon as you go, until it is crumbly (it should look like ground meat), well browned and slightly crispy.

Add beaten eggs and cook until they start to set, using a rubber spatula to toss and turn them as they cook to keep them from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Stir in chopped green onion and toss gently to combine.

Reduce heat to low, and sprinkle shredded cheese on top of eggs, then gently fold in. Cook until cheese starts to melt, about 30 seconds. Remove from heat and cover to keep egg mixture warm while you prepare the tortillas.

Wrap tortillas in a damp paper towel and microwave for about 10 seconds to soften. To assemble burritos, spread a tablespoon of chipotle sour cream on the bottom third of each tortilla, leaving a 3/4-inch border. Layer one-sixth of the tater tots on top of the sour cream, followed by one-sixth of the egg mixture. Fold sides of tortilla over filling, then fold up the bottom and roll tightly around filling.

Wipe the skillet clean again with a paper towel, add remaining 1 tablespoon oil and heat until shimmering over medium heat. Place burritos in pan, seam side down, and cook until they're golden and crispy, turning once, about 1-2 minutes per side.

Serve warm with salsa or pico de gallo on the side, or slice and wrap in aluminum foil for breakfast on the go.

Makes 6 burritos.

— Gretchen McKay, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)