



# VIDALIA ONIONS



Thank you for supporting our fundraising event by purchasing the "Ohhh, so sweet" Vidalia onions from the Medinah Shriners this year. Hope you look for us again next year!

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Vidalia Onion story began over 70 years ago in Toombs County, Georgia. In 1931, a farmer by the name of Mose Coleman discovered the onions he had planted were not hot...they were SWEET! It was a struggle to sell the concept of a "sweet" onion, but Coleman persevered and managed to sell those first crops for \$3.50 per 50-lb. bag. In the 40's they began appearing on the shelves of Piggly Wiggly. Through the 1950's and 60's production grew at a slow but steady pace, reaching some 600 total acres of Vidalia Onions harvested annually by the mid 70's. Later 70's the Onion had achieved such success that it merited its own festival. In 1980, the Vidalia Onion official mascot was created; Yumion is a colorful character designed to appeal to children of all ages is a regular at area parades as well as nationwide events.

There are about 15 varieties of onions approved for planting as Vidalias by the Georgia Agricultural Commission. The planting process starts by producing seedlings that are allowed to germinate in a controlled environment. Once enough of the seedlings have been properly germinated, they are inserted into the unique low sulphur soil by hand. Georgia's 130 registered growers plant an estimated 15,000 acres of Vidalia Onions. 70,000 plants are produced on each acre and are typically planted in 14" rows between 4½ -6" apart. Irrigation is utilized to water the onions when Mother Nature deprives the onion growing region with needed rainfall. During the growing season temperatures average in the mid-50's in the winter and mid-70's in the spring and rainfall averages 3½". This combination produces a sweet, mild Vidalia Onion with a somewhat flat top and bottom.

Harvesting typically occurs from late April through mid-June. The delicate nature of the Onions requires that they be harvested by hand. Standard practices in onion harvesting include undercutting the onions, allowing them to cure (air dry) for two to three days, clipping the tops and roots, bagging in burlap sacks, transporting to a warehouse, drying grading, bagging or boxing and shipping.

## ONION PUDDING

3 C coarsely chopped Vidalia onions, about 3 large  
½ tsp poultry seasoning  
1 ½ T butter  
1 ½ T flour  
1 ½ C milk  
¾ C fine dry bread crumbs, unseasoned  
2 eggs, separated  
Salt and pepper  
Chopped parsley for garnish

Separate eggs. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form; set aside. Lightly beat egg yolks; set aside. Place onions and poultry seasoning in a small amount of salted water; bring to a boil. Boil until onions are tender; drain. In another saucepan, melt butter and stir in flour. Gradually add milk; cook, stirring constantly, until thickened. Add drained onions, ½ C bread crumbs and slightly beaten egg yolks. Season with salt and pepper. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Turn mixture into a buttered 1 ½-qt. casserole. Sprinkle with remaining ¼ C bread crumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for about 35-45 minutes or until set. Sprinkle onion pudding with chopped parsley. Serves 4.

## Handling, Storing and Tips

A fresh Vidalia Onion has a light golden-brown bulb and a white interior. Its shape is rounded at the bottom and somewhat flat on the top or stem end. Ordinary storage onions are darker, have a thicker skin and are generally more round or oblong.

Vidalia Onions have a higher water and sugar content than storage onions, making them susceptible to bruising and therefore must be handled with care by the grower, the retailer and the consumer.

Since Vidalia Onions are available only a portion of the year, sweet onion buyers buy them in quantity (50 lbs. or more) and store them for extended enjoyment.

The key to preserving Vidalias and to prevent bruising is to keep them cool, dry and separated.

There are several favorite methods of storage:

1. Store them in the refrigerator, wrapped separately in a paper towel. This method is expensive and takes up precious refrigerator space, but can preserve Vidalia Onions for as long as a year.
2. Store them in the legs of clean, sheer pantyhose. Tie a knot between each Vidalia and cut above the knot when you want one. Hang in a cool, DRY, well-ventilated area. On elevated racks or screens, not touching and in a cool place.
3. Vidalia Onions can be chopped and dried in the oven. Use the lowest setting and remove when thoroughly dry but not brown. Store at room temperature in airtight containers.
4. Vidalia Onions can be frozen. Chop and place on a cookie sheet in the freezer. When frozen, remove and place in freezer containers or bags and seal. This allows you to remove the amount you want when you want it.

An alternative is to freeze whole. Jumbos can be peeled, washed and cored and dropped in a plastic bag. Once frozen, they can be removed like ice cubes. Freezing changes the onion's texture, so frozen onions should be used for cooking only. Whole frozen Vidalias can also be baked.

Vidalias are sweeter and milder than any other onions. They are excellent in salads and sandwiches. Place a whole, raw unpeeled Vidalia in the frig and chill for approx. 1 hour before serving or peel and cut into slices and place in a bowl of ice water for approx. 30 min. and then drain on paper towels. Either way will bring out the sweeter flavor when eating raw.

# HOW TO PREPARE VIDALIAS

To prepare, we suggest a variety of flavorful options:

- CHOPPED:** Vidalia's are perfect chopped in salads where more pungent onions can be overpowering
- SLICED:** Add thick slices atop sandwiches or hamburgers for a sweet zing
- SAUTEED:** The perfect accoutrement to steak, pork, or other meats
- BAKED:** An easy side dish that turns out similar to French onion soup. Peel a large Vidalia, then cut off the top and bottom to make the onion sit flat. Core the middle and add a pat of butter inside. Microwave for around 5 min. on high or wrap securely in foil and bake at 350° for 45 min. or until tender.

**CARAMELIZED:** Heat a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat. Add 2 T. butter (or combo of butter and olive oil). When butter has melted, lower heat to medium low and add onions. Stir occasionally to prevent browning. Cook until completely wilted and soft, about 20 min. Increase heat slightly and cook, stirring constantly until browned and caramelized about 20 min. more. Add a spoonful or two of cider vinegar or white wine along with a little fresh thyme if desired and stir, scraping up bits from bottom of pan. When liquid is evaporated, remove from heat and season with salt and pepper to taste. Use as a side dish for roasted meats or as a topping for sandwiches, hamburgers or pizzas. Yield 1 cup.

You can't rush caramelization. Caramelized onions must be cooked slowly over low heat to evaporate the moisture without immediate browning. Quarter and thinly slice about 1 lb. onions, enough to make 4 cups.

## NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF A VIDALIA ONION

Serving Size	raw, 1 medium onion (148 grams)		
Calories	60	Protein	1 gram
Carbs	16 grams	Total Fat	0
Saturated Fat	0	Sodium	5 milligrams
Potassium	5 milligrams	Dietary Fiber	1 gram

## VIDALIA SWEET ONION PIE

- 1 ½ C finely crushed buttery crackers such as Ritz crackers
- ¾ stick (6 T) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 C thinly sliced Vidalia onions
- ¾ C milk (do not use low-fat milk)
- 2 eggs
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¾ C packed grated sharp cheddar cheese (about 3 oz.)
- Paprika
- Chopped parsley

Preheat oven to 350. Mix crackers and 4 T butter in bowl until well blended. Press mixture on bottom and 1 in. up sides of 8 in. pie plate. Melt remaining 2 T butter in heavy medium skillet over medium heat. Add onions and sauté until tender, about 12 min. Arrange onions in cracker crust. Beat milk, eggs and salt in medium bowl until blended. Season with pepper. Pour egg mixture over onions in crust. Sprinkle cheese over filling. Sprinkle with paprika. Bake pie until knife inserted into center comes out clean, about 35 min. Garnish with parsley and serve.

## PASTA WITH SHRIMP AND VIDALIA ONION ORIENTAL

- 8 oz. uncooked fettuccine
- ¼ C rice wine vinegar
- 1 T oriental sesame oil
- 5 C Vidalia onions wedges
- 1 lb extra large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ½ C soy sauce
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1/8 tsp ground red pepper
- 1 C sweet red pepper, cut in 1" chunks
- 2 tsp cornstarch

Cook fettuccine according to package directions; drain and place in a large bowl and set aside. Preheat broiler. Meanwhile, in a bowl combine soy sauce, vinegar, ¼ C water, ginger, sesame oil and ground red pepper. On a rack of a broiler pan, place onion and red pepper. Lightly brush vegetables with soy mixture. Broil until vegetables just start to soften, about 3 min. Turn and push to side of pan. Place shrimp in a single layer on broiler pan. Lightly brush with soy mixture. Broil until shrimp turn pink, about 1 minute; turn and broil until cooked through, about 1 minute longer. Add shrimp and vegetables to pasta. In a small saucepan combine cornstarch and remaining soy mixture until smooth/ bring to a boil, stirring constantly, until thickened about 1 min. 'til boiling and stir 1 min. longer. Toss with pasta & serve.

### Vidalia Green Bean Salad, (Cont.)

Fill medium saucepan  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of water; bring to a boil. Add beans and cook 'til nearly crisp-tender, 2-3 min. Drain; rinse under cold water until beans are cool. Cut in half lengthwise, then in 1" pieces. Place in large bowl along with onions and cilantro; set aside. In the same saucepan, combine vinegar, oil, sugar, salt and black pepper. Cover and refrigerate until cool, about 1 hr. On 4 serving plates, arrange lettuce. Using a slotted spoon, place onion mixture over lettuce; drizzle slightly with vinegar mixture. Sprinkle with peanuts. Yields 4 servings

### SUMMER SALAD

3 C cooked macaroni	3 C sliced cucumbers
3 tomatoes, chopped	$\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped Vidalia onions
$\frac{1}{2}$ C mayo	$\frac{1}{4}$ C vinegar
Salt & pepper	

Combine first four ingredients. Mix together mayo and vinegar; toss with vegetables and macaroni. Salt and pepper to taste. Serves 8

### VIDALIA CASSEROLE

$\frac{1}{2}$ C butter rings	4 medium onions, sliced in $\frac{1}{4}$ "
15 saltine crackers, crushed	1 can cream of mushroom soup
2 eggs beaten	$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ C milk
1 C shredded sharp cheddar cheese	

Melt butter in large fry pan. Saute onions over medium heat until clear. Reserve 4 T of cracker crumbs for topping and place remaining crumbs in the bottom of a lightly greased 2-qt. casserole. Remove onions from pan with slotted spoon. Combine all ingredients. Top with cheese and remaining cracker crumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-30 min. or until brown and bubbly. Yield 6 servings

## RECIPES

### CRISPY FRIED ONION RINGS

4 large sweet onions	Milk
$\frac{2}{3}$ C yellow cornmeal	$\frac{2}{3}$ C all-purpose flour
$\frac{1}{4}$ teas salt	$\frac{1}{8}$ teas pepper
2 T melted shortening	1 beaten egg
$1 \frac{2}{3}$ C milk	Flour

Peel onions and slice into rounds  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. Separate rings; soak in milk for 15 min. Meanwhile, mix cornmeal, flour, salt, pepper, melted shortening, egg and  $1 \frac{2}{3}$  milk to make the batter. Drain onion rings; dip in batter then in flour. Fry onion rings in deep fat at 370-375° for 2-3 min. or until golden brown.

### SWEET VIDALIA ONION RINGS

2 large refrigerated Vidalia onions	
2 C plain flour	1 C buttermilk
2 T Season All	1 T garlic salt
$\frac{1}{2}$ T red pepper	

Slice cold onions  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick and separate. Mix dry ingredients. Dip onions in buttermilk. Coat well with flour mixture. Drop in hot grease and lay on paper towels to drain.

### BAKED VIDALIA ONION DIP

$2 \frac{1}{2}$ C coarsely chopped Vidalia onions	
2 C Hellmanns mayo	2 C shredded mozzarella cheese
salt and pepper to taste	

Combine all of the above and place in shallow baking dish. Bake at 350 for 25-30 min. or until top is beginning to turn golden brown. Serve piping hot with your favorite crackers.

## VIDALIA ONION & HAM BRUSCHETTA

4 oz. sliced low fat ham cut into 1-in. pieces (3/4 C.)  
1 C chopped Vidalia Onion  
1 C chopped plum tomatoes  
2 T reduced calorie mayonnaise  
1 T prepared Dijon-style mustard  
8 large slices (3/4 in. thick) Italian bread, toasted

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a medium bowl combine ham, onion, tomatoes, mayo and mustard. Arrange bread in a large baking sheet; top with ham mixture. Bake until heated through, 10-15 min. Serve immediately.

## PICKLED ONIONS

Slice Vidalia onions about 1/4 inch, put in jar and add half vinegar and half water. Cover, refrigerate and serve 3 days later as a side like a pickle.

## VIDALIA ONION RELISH

3 or 4 thinly sliced onions      1 C sugar  
1/2 C cider vinegar                2 C water  
1/2 C low-fat or fat-free mayo      1 tsp. celery salt

Marinate onions in marinade for at least 2 hrs. in frig. Drain well and mix with dressing. Serve as an hors d'oeuvre on crackers or as a substitute for coleslaw. Keeps well for 24-48 hrs.

## VIDALIA SWEET ONION AND PEAR SALSA

2 C chopped onions                      1 C diced unpeeled pear  
1/2 C chopped roasted red pepper    2 T chopped fresh jalapeno pepper  
2 T chopped fresh cilantro            2 T lime juice      3/4 tsp salt

In medium bowl, combine ingredients. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate up to 2 days. Serve grilled with seafood, chicken or hamburgers. Makes 3 cups.

## SWEET ONION, APPLE AND CHICKEN SALAD

3 C (about 1 lb.) diced, unpeeled sweet red apples  
2 C diced cooked chicken breast  
1 C coarsely chopped Vidalia onion  
1 C sliced celery  
1/4 C dark raisins  
1/4 C chopped toasted walnuts or pecans  
Creamy apple dressing (recipe follows)

To roast walnuts; place in a dry pan over low heat, stirring frequently, until golden, about 5 min.

Combine all ingredients in a large serving bowl. Top with Creamy Apple Dressing; toss to coat. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

### Creamy Apple Dressing

Combine:

1/2 C plain yogurt  
1/4 C reduced-calorie mayo  
1/4 C apple juice  
1 T lemon juice  
1 1/4 tsp salt  
1/8 tsp ground black pepper  
Makes 1 Cup

## VIDALIA GREEN BEAN SALAD

2 C (about 8 oz.) fresh green beans and/or yellow wax beans  
2 C thinly sliced Vidalia onions, about 12 oz.  
2 T chopped fresh cilantro  
1/3 C raspberry vinegar  
3 T peanut or vegetable oil  
2 T sugar  
3/4 tsp salt  
1/4 tsp ground black pepper  
4 C Boston lettuce, torn in bite-size pieces  
1/2 C chopped roasted peanuts  
(cont. on next page)

## VIDALIA ONION SPINACH SALAD

### Croutons:

4 C soft bread crumbs  
1/3 C finely chopped Vidalia onion  
1 T dried parsley flakes  
6 T butter, melted  
1 egg, lightly beaten  
Oil for frying

In a large bowl, combine the bread crumbs, onion and parsley. Stir in butter and egg. Shape into 1/2 in. balls. In an electric skillet, heat 1 in. of oil to 375. Fry croutons for 10-15 seconds, turning to brown on all sides. Drain on paper towels.

### Dressing:

1/3 C chopped Vidalia onion  
1/3 C cider vinegar  
1/3 C honey  
1 tsp Dijon mustard  
1/2 C + 2 T olive oil  
1 tsp poppy seeds

Combine the onion, vinegar, honey and mustard in a blender; cover and process until smooth. While processing, gradually add oil in a steady stream. Stir in poppy seeds.

### Salad:

16 C torn fresh spinach  
1/2 lb sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled  
1 medium Vidalia onion sliced and separated into rings

In a salad bowl, toss the spinach, bacon, onion rings and croutons. Serve with dressing. Yields: 16 servings

## BAKED STUFFED ONIONS

6 med. sweet onions  
1/2 C finely minced cooked ham  
1 C soft bread crumbs  
Salt and pepper  
1/4 C chopped green pepper  
1 1/2 T melted butter

Peel onions; rinse, pat dry and cut off tops. Pierce each onion with skewer to keep together. Cook onions in boiling salted water until almost tender. Drain onions and remove centers. Chop onion centers and combine with ham, green pepper, 1/2 C bread crumbs, 1 T butter, salt and pepper. Fill onions with ham mixture and place in a baking dish. Pour 1 C chicken or beef broth or white sauce in baking pan around onions. Combine remaining 1/2 C bread crumbs with 1/2 T melted butter. Top onions with buttered bread crumbs and bake at 375 for 30 minutes.

## SWEET & SOUR VIDALIA ONIONS AND CUCUMBERS

3 C peeled, seeded and thinly sliced cucumbers  
1 1/2 C thinly sliced Vidalia onions  
1/2 C grated carrot  
1/4 C sugar  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/2 C white vinegar  
2 T chopped fresh dill or 1 T dry  
1/4 tsp black pepper

In medium bowl, toss together cucumbers, onions and carrots, set aside. In liquid measuring cup, combine vinegar, sugar, dill 2 T water, salt and pepper. Pour over cucumber mixture, toss to coat. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.  
Serves 6.

## UNCLE WILSON'S GRILLED ONIONS

6 large Vidalia onions  
2 T butter  
12 strips of bacon  
Salt and pepper

Peel & wash onions. Cut 1-in. core from top of each onion & make shallow slits in a circle around top. Wrap 2 slices bacon horizontally around each onion. Secure with toothpicks. Put 1 tsp of butter in ea. core. Season w/ salt & pepper. Place each one on aluminum foil. Wrap leaving small opening for steam to escape. Put on grill. Cook for 1 hr. Cool. Cut in 4's to serve.

## ONION MUFFINS

2 large egg, slightly beaten	1/3 C vegetable oil
3/4 C milk	1 C self-rising flour
1 C old-fashioned oats	1/4 C sugar
1/2 C chopped Vidalia onion	3/4 C shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
1/4 C chopped pecans	

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the egg, oil and milk; add flour, oats and sugar. Stir batter just until blended. Gently fold in onion, shredded cheese and pecans; spoon the mixture into 36 small buttered and floured 1/8 C miniature muffin tins. Bake in middle of preheated 400 oven for 15-20 min or until golden brown. Turn muffins out onto racks and serve warm or at room temperature. Makes 36 miniature muffins.

## VIDALIA ONION SOUP

4-5 large sweet onions, chopped	
3 T butter	1/4 tsp pepper
1 T all-purpose flour	4 C beef broth
1 1/2 C water	1 bay leaf
8 slices French bread, toasted	1/2 C Swiss cheese

In a Dutch oven sauté the onions in butter until lightly browned. Sprinkle with pepper and flour. Cook and stir for 2 min. Add the broth, water and bay leaf; simmer for 30-40 min., stirring occasionally. Discard the bay leaf. Ladle into ovenproof bowls; top with bread and cheese and bake at 400 for 10 min or until cheese is golden brown. Makes 8 servings.

## SWEET ONION AND BROCCOLI SOUP

1 large Vidalia onion, chopped	2 T margarine
2 C milk	1 1/2 C of boiled chicken, chopped (optional)
2 - 8 oz. pkgs. cream cheese cubed	
1 - 10 oz. pkg of chopped frozen broccoli, cooked and drained	

Sauté onion in butter in saucepan until tender. Add cream cheese and milk; stir over low heat until cheese is melted. Add other ingredients and heat thoroughly. Enjoy!

## GRILLED VIDALIA ONION WITH ORANGE-HONEY VINEGRETTE

2 large (about 1 1/2 lbs) Vidalia onions, cut in eight 1/2" slices	
1/4 C orange juice	1 T olive oil
2 tsp red wine vinegar	1 1/2 tsp honey or brown sugar
1/2 tsp salt	pinch of ground black pepper

Preheat outdoor grill or broiler. Place Vidalia onion slices on a grill or broiler pan. Grill until slightly softened and golden brown, about 3 min; turn and cook until tender, about 3 min. longer. To prepare dressing, combine in small bowl, orange juice, oil, vinegar, honey, salt and pepper; spoon over grilled onions. Serve on a bed of spinach leaves topped with chopped tomatoes and drizzled with dressing. Makes 4 portions

## DELICIOUS VIDALIA DRESSING

1 1/2 C canola oil	1 C distilled white vinegar
1 large sweet onion, peeled and quartered	1 clove garlic
1 tsp. ground mustard	1/3 C white sugar
	1 T salt

Place ingredients into a blender or food processor and blend until smooth.

## SWEET ONION SALAD DRESSING

1 C sugar	1 tsp salt
dry mustard	2 T vegetable oil
celery seed	1/2 C vinegar
1 medium onion, grated	

In saucepan, combine sugar, salt, mustard and celery seed. Add grated onion, oil and vinegar. Heat until sugar is melted. Cool and refrigerate or serve as a warm dressing. Makes about 1 1/2 cups.