OH SHOOT! IT’S GARLIC SCAPE SEASON

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SPRING’S ‘IT’ ALLIUM

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By Anita Bushell

One of the great joys of shopping at the Coop is having access to fleetingly seasonal foods.

Large supermarkets don’t tend to place a premium on fruits and vegetables that have vanishingly narrow windows of availability. The trouble of tracking them down can outweigh the profits. What’s more, many American consumers prefer consistency.

Shopping at the Coop, on the other hand, is like being a purveyor at a fine restaurant, one whose chef wanders the stalls at Union Square farmers market or the back roads of Marin County looking for what's delicious today—and not for much longer.

> "AMONG THE MANY REASONS I LIKE SPRING IS SEEING GARLIC SCAPES PEEKING OUT FROM THE MIST OF THE PRODUCE COOLER."
>
> *PRODUCE MANAGER JOHN HORSMAN*

In wintertime, my partner will gleefully bring home from the Coop a few Buddha's hands, the citrons whose striking fingered shapes call to mind little yellow octopi, and make marmalade for the few weeks they are available. Among the many reasons I like spring is seeing garlic scapes peeking out from the mist of the produce cooler. The sight is as much a sign of renewal as the appearance of daffodils on the city streets. Like Proust's madeleines, garlic scapes connect me with delicious meals of the past, and give me hope for the future.

Garlic scapes are edible green shoots that grow from the garlic root. The long and curly green stems, which look like wild onions, sprout in late spring. Their taste is sweet and musky, and they can be the base of gorgeous pestos and soups, among other dishes.



Garlic scape photo by Lisa Guido

To find out more I spoke with Produce Manager John Horsman to get his take on the lesser-known member of the garlic family. Below the interview you'll find my two favorite garlic scape recipes.

John, what exactly are garlic scapes?

They are the long, curly flower stalks that grow from hard neck garlic once the plants start maturing.

Do they grow at the same time as garlic?

Garlic scapes are usually removed from the plant to encourage the garlic bulbs to grow larger. After the scapes are cut, the plant redirects its energy into forming the

garlic bulbs, which are harvested in mid-to-late summer.

When does the Coop start selling them?

We usually start getting them at the end of May or beginning of June. We tend to have them on hand for about eight weeks.

What do they taste like?

They have a mild, fresh garlic flavor.

How can you use them?

They are usually sautéed, grilled or roasted but can also be eaten raw in salads.

Where does the Coop get garlic scapes from?

We have been getting them from Lancaster Farm Fresh Co-op the past few seasons.

How do they sell?

They sell very well during the short growing period. We go through about 10 cases a week.

TWO DELICIOUS GARLIC SCAPE RECIPES:

GARLIC SCAPE PESTO

Adapted from seriouseats.com

Ingredients:

• 3/4 cup coarsely chopped garlic scapes
• 1/4 cup pine nuts
• 1 tablespoon lemon juice plus 1 teaspoon grated zest (from 1 lemon)
• 1/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
• ¼ cup washed basil leaves, with water still clinging to the leaves
• 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
• ¼ cup pistachio oil
• salt
• black pepper

Directions:

Combine scapes, pine nuts, lemon juice and zest, and season with salt. Add to a food processor and process for about one minute. Add cheese and process for about 30 seconds. Add basil and pulse until finely minced, about ten one-second pulses.

Transfer to a bowl. Slowly pour oils into a bowl while stirring mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

GARLIC SCAPE AND BACON STIR FRY

Adapted from bonappetit.com

Ingredients:

• 3 thick-cut slices of bacon or a similar amount of pancetta
• ½ pound garlic scapes, chopped into roughly 2″ pieces
• Soy sauce

Directions:

1. Roughly chop bacon or pancetta**.**
2. Add to a wok or cast-iron pan over medium to high heat. Cook until browned. There should be enough rendered fat for the garlic scapes to sizzle in. (If the pan looks dry add a little neutral oil.)
3. Throw in garlic scapes and stir-fry for three to four minutes, until scapes are tender but still have a crunch. Sprinkle with soy sauce to taste**,** then remove from heat.

Anita Bushell is a freelance writer who has been published in Friends Journal*,* Ford Foundation Report*, and* Uncensored: American Experiences with Poverty and Homelessness*. She just published her debut novel,* One Way to Whitefish*. anitabushell.com*