

KNOW YOUR ONIONS

— Especially Garlic

A WHAKATANE Link in the Daisy Chain, who signs her- (or him-) self "Kohanga," writes as follows: "I would esteem it a favour if you would advise your readers, through the columns of *The Listener*, of the different uses of garlic. This is supposed to be a healthful vegetable, and reputed to be highly beneficial to those suffering from lung and chest troubles; but very few people grow it, or know anything about its numerous uses."

"Kohanga" gave me a very interesting little task, and suggested this short article on onions, which in one form or another are second only to salt as a seasoning in cookery.

In spite of the old wisecrack that "while onions may build you up physically they drag you down socially," onions are generally regarded as a necessity. To-day we have many kinds of onions, from chives, which are considered the most innocent of the race, through the range of shallots, leeks, Spanish, and others, to garlic, which is considered the most guilty.

Its Medical Value

Gould's Medical Dictionary tells us that "the undried bulb of the garlic contains a pungent volatile oil, which is found also in the leek and the onion. In small amounts, garlic acts as a condiment, and aids in the digestion and absorption of food. In chronic bronchitis garlic applied as a poultice to the chest and taken internally in milk is beneficial. Poultices of garlic applied to the spine are recommended in infantile convulsions, and may be applied over the abdomen in gastro-intestinal catarrh. The common onion and the leek have similar qualities. Syrup of Garlic contains fresh garlic, sugar, and dilute acetic acid in certain quantities."

In Richardson's "Health and Longevity" I find "Garlic is a domestic remedy for whooping cough. Syrup of garlic is given in doses of five drops to a teaspoonful two or three times a day, or oftener, if the coughing spells are frequent and violent. The odour is quite offensive, and some will prefer other measures on this account."

Old-Fashioned Remedy

Thus we see once again how the simple "grandmother's remedies" are borne out by medical authority. The old-fashioned, smelly, but efficacious onion poultice for sore throat and colds, made by enclosing raw shredded onion in a linen compress tied round the throat at bed time, is known to all the older generation; and last year, much interest, and some criticism, was aroused by a similar remedy for whooping cough which was recommended by a motherly Link in our Chain. This consisted of scraped and pounded garlic mixed with lard, made

into a poultice and applied to the soles of the feet. Do you remember this? It was proved to be very good by many distracted mothers. But remember, too, that it was necessary to add the lard, and to enclose the poultice in sufficient thickness of cloth or muslin, because garlic alone tended to blister the skin.

Onion Porridge

Gould's reference to garlic being beneficial in bronchitis cases when taken internally in milk supports the old English idea of giving Onion Porridge at bed time for a bad cold. This was just a bowl of onions boiled whole in milk, with a knob of butter, then mashed, and slightly thickened with cornflour. Garlic would be too unpalatable.

Onions for Cough

Another old remedy for whooping cough is to cut a large onion in slices and put these in a basin with alternate layers of brown (or white) sugar. Cover with a plate, and leave for some hours. Give a dessertspoon of the resultant juice when cough is troublesome. Turnips may be crushed and used instead of onion, and honey instead of sugar.

A Garlic Festival

In olden times, in Southern Europe, a regular pagan festival took place when the new garlic crop came in, and until fairly recently this custom continued in parts of France, "with dancing in the streets, and the hearty nibbling of whole heads of garlic, as though they were apples." I quote from an American book by "The Browns," who even suggested a Garlic Day in America, on which everybody might eat the vegetable, so that nobody would be able to complain of the odour.

Garlic in Cooking

A very little garlic goes a very long way. Its use varies according to the national taste, from a maximum in Italy and Spain, to a minimum in Britain. With us, its main use is in pickles, sauces, and chutneys; but even in these it must be used with care.

Worcester Sauce

Here is a good recipe including garlic. Half a pint of treacle, 1 quart of vinegar, ½ pint mushroom ketchup, ½ oz., or less, cayenne pepper, 1 small lemon, sliced, ½ oz. each of salt, garlic, bruised cloves, and ground ginger. Mix in a basin, stir with a wooden spoon three or four times a day, for five days. Strain twice, bottle, and cork tightly.

In French restaurants, a salad of curly endive is flavoured by merely mixing with it a shredded crust of bread on which a clove of garlic has been rubbed! In Southern Europe, garlic is simply rubbed on bread in place of butter; and another "delicacy" is made by

simmering garlic cloves in olive oil till jelly-like (which makes them quite mild!) and then adding mild cheese till melted, making a kind of Welsh rabbit, which is piled on toast as usual.

Chives

Use the tender green tops of this delicate onion, clipped very fine; sprinkle over mashed potatoes, instead of parsley—or with it—or over grilled chops, over any kind of green salad, or tomatoes, or over salad dressing. Chopped chives are delightful mixed with cream cheese, or with any soft mild packaged cheese, as a sandwich spread. Omelettes flavoured with chives are delightful—just fold them in with the beaten whites.

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