



Recipes
Tips & Tricks
Nutrition Info

INSIDE ONIONS

Consumer Newsletter



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February 2026

- What new dietary guidelines mean for you
- Winter kitchen hacks you weren't taught
- Cooking with kids as a sensory experience
- Recipe Box: Slow Cooker French Onion Soup
- Onionista Blog: How Onions Help Your Heart
- Meet a farm family: The Maags of Oregon
- Download our Nature's Ninja playbook filled with onion nutrition information, preparation and cooking tips, and recipes

In Season

Storage onions will harvest this month and be available through May of next year. Storage onions are amazing in that they can last for months in cool storage.



Available August-May

- Easy to recognize by their multiple layers of thick, darker colored skin
- Commonly lower in water content, they have a longer shelf-life
- Range in flavor from mild to pungent
- * Best for savory dishes that require longer cooking times or more flavor

National Heart Month

Heart disease doesn't just affect "other people." It can touch anyone, and it's showing up earlier than many of us expect. Long hours of sitting, screen time, and busy schedules often leave little room for movement or healthy meals. Over time, those habits add up. Carrying extra weight, high blood pressure, smoking, and chronic stress all increase risk. Meaningful change doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul.

Small, consistent changes add up over time:

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- Cut back on fast food and add more fruits and vegetables to meals
- Aim for at least one extra serving of produce each day
- Move more during daily routines:
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Park farther from entrances
- Stand up and stretch during work breaks
- Go for a short walk after dinner
- Turn family time into active time:
- Walk the kids to school
- Play in the yard or ride bikes together
- Visit the park as a family
- Take the dog for an extra walk
- Manage stress and prioritize sleep
- Build healthier routines one step at a time
- Support heart health while boosting energy, mood, and overall well-being





The Onionista

Got a message for the Onionista? Write to
onionista@onions-usa.org

Inside Onions

Message From The Onionista

Who is the Onionista?

Hi! I'm René Hardwick, Aka The Onionista. As The Director Of Public And Industry Relations For The National Onion Association, I Wanted A Fun Way To Connect With People On The Web. That Is How 'Onionista' Was Born. She Is A Fun And Informal Way For Me To Share My Passion For Onions, Food, And Agriculture With Consumers.

In this monthly newsletter, I hope to share with you not only great new recipes and recipe videos, but nutrition nuggets to help round out the menus you serve to your family.

The National Onion Association tells the story of the bulb onion, promoting the usage and visibility of the third most consumed fresh vegetable in the U.S. with active

media relations, recipe development, culinary education and more.

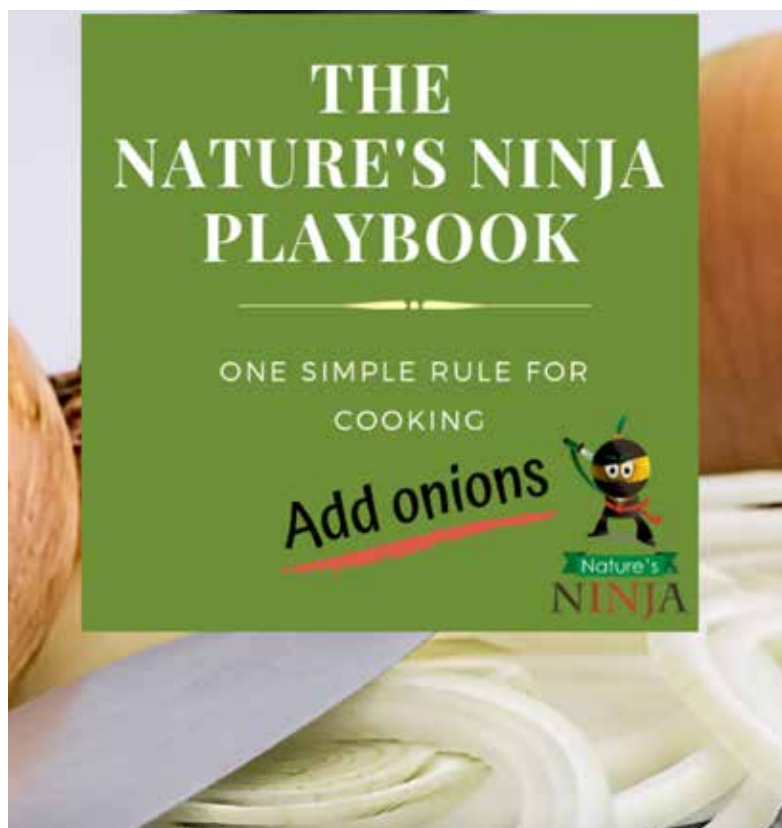
Members of NOA rely on the non-profit trade association for

up-to-date information, government representation, industry-wide networking, as well as consumer outreach. Visit www.onions-usa.org for more information.

Need onion info?

The National Onion Association has released its ebook, Nature's Ninja Playbook, a guide for selecting, cutting, and cooking onions, along with handy tips and tasty recipes to include onions in every meal of the day.

The NOA has nicknamed the onion "Nature's Ninja" for the many qualities it possesses to stay fresh and — keep those who eat it healthy. It has 12 vitamins and minerals is naturally fat and cholesterol free.



New Dietary Guidelines

What the Changes Mean for Your Plate

The federal government just released updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and the message is pretty straightforward: eat more real food and rely less on heavily processed stuff. Officials say this is the biggest reset to nutrition advice in decades—but what does that mean for you?

The big takeaways, in plain language

Protein matters more than before

You're encouraged to include a solid source of protein at every meal. That could be chicken, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, or dairy. The recommended amounts are higher than in the past, which means meals built around protein—not just carbs—are now the norm.

Fat isn't the enemy anymore

Healthy fats get a green light. Think olive oil for cooking, nuts for snacks, avocados on salads, and yes—full-fat dairy like whole milk and cheese. This is a shift away from decades of “low-fat everything” advice.

Ultra-processed foods are strongly discouraged

Packaged snacks, sugary drinks, and foods with long ingredient lists are called out more clearly than ever. The guidelines say your body doesn't need added sugar at all, and if you do have it, keep it very small—about 10 grams per meal or less.

Vegetables, fruit, and grains still count

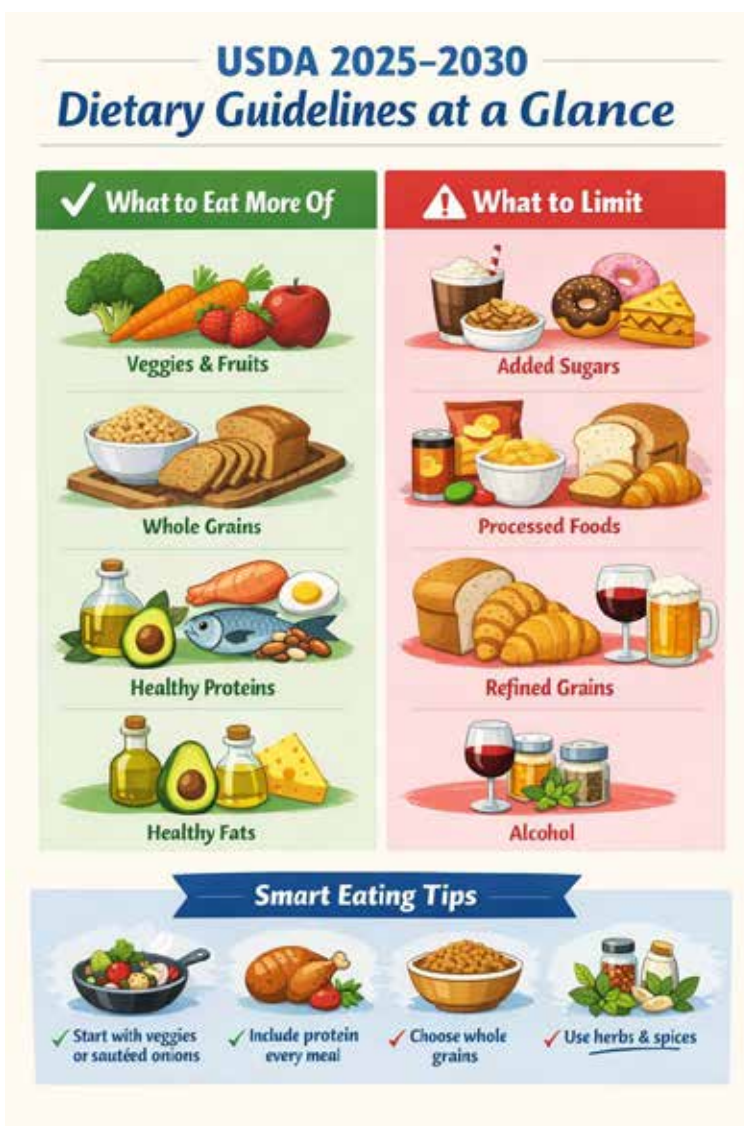
Produce remains a foundation of healthy eating. Whole grains are still recommended, but refined grains (white bread, pastries, many boxed cereals) are less of a priority than protein and whole foods.

Alcohol advice is simpler

Instead of specific drink limits, the guidance now boils down to: drink less. The less you drink, the better for your health.

Why this matters in everyday life

These guidelines don't just sit on a website. They shape school lunches, hospital meals, and the advice doctors and dietitians give.



They also influence how foods are labeled and marketed in grocery stores.

For most people, this looks like:

- Cooking more meals at home
- Choosing foods with fewer ingredients you recognize
- Building meals around protein, vegetables, and healthy fats
- Cutting back on sugary snacks and drinks without overthinking it

Not everyone agrees—and that's okay

Some experts love the stronger focus on whole foods. Others are cautious about encouraging more meat and full-fat dairy. But the overall direction is clear: simpler meals made with real ingredients.

Bottom line: The new guidelines push eating patterns most people already understand—cook when you can, shop the perimeter of the grocery store, enjoy fats and protein without guilt, and save ultra-processed foods for occasional treats, not daily staples.

BEST USES

for Yellow onions

Grilled, sautéed, caramelized, baked or roasted.

Recipe box

CATEGORY:

Soups, Stews

PREP TIME:

15 minutes

COOK TIME:

3-4 hours



Click photo for recipe directions

Slow Cooker French Onion Soup

Ingredients

2 pounds yellow onions, trimmed, halved and sliced (2 quarts)
1 box (32 ounces) beef broth, less-sodium version if desired (1 quart)
2 teaspoons dried thyme
1/2 cup white wine or water
2 tablespoons flour
6 thick slices sour dough bread or rustic loaf, crusts trimmed
1/2 cup grated Parmesan or Swiss cheese
Cracked pepper (optional)

Why Comfort Food Matters This Time of Year

By the time February rolls around, most of us are ready for something familiar. The holidays are behind us, the days are still short, and winter has lost its novelty. It's the month when routines settle in—and when meals at home start to matter a little more.

Comfort food shows up quietly in February. It's not flashy or tied to a big celebration. It's the pot simmering on the stove, the casserole reheated for the second night, the smell of onions cooking before anything else hits the pan. These are the meals that warm the house and slow things down, even on busy evenings.

There's a reason foods like soups, stews, pastas, and baked dishes feel especially right now. They ask you to linger just a bit—stirring, tasting, waiting. That small pause can feel grounding in the middle of winter, when everything else feels rushed or gray. Comfort food doesn't

demand perfection. It welcomes substitutions, second helpings, and leftovers.

February meals also tend to bring people back to the kitchen table. With fewer social events and colder nights, dinner becomes the anchor of the day. It's where stories are shared, phones get set aside, and everyone reconnects, even if only for twenty minutes. The food helps, but it's really about the moment.

Many of us lean into recipes that feel familiar this time of year. Maybe it's something passed down, or just a dish you've made so many times you don't need to think about it. Those meals carry memory along with flavor. They remind us of other winters, other kitchens, and people who once sat in the same chairs.

Comfort food isn't about indulgence—it's about care. It's cooking that says, "You're home. You're fed. You're okay."

In February, that message feels especially meaningful. So if your meals this month are simple, warm, and repeated often, that's not a lack of creativity. It's instinct. Comfort food meets us where we are—and this time of year, that's exactly what we need.



Winter kitchen hacks to make cold days easier

Winter is prime time for smart little kitchen moves. Here are 10 winter kitchen hacks that make cold days easier, warmer, and a bit more comforting:

1. Let the oven heat work for you

After baking, turn the oven off and crack the door open. The leftover heat warms the kitchen while you clean up—just keep pets and kids in mind.

2. Start meals with sautéed onions

Cooking onions first warms the room and fills the house with a cozy smell that makes dinner feel comforting before it's even done.

3. Simmer instead of rushing

Soups, stews, and sauces gently heating on the stove add warmth to the kitchen and taste better the longer they cook.

4. Use sheet pans for one-oven dinners

Roasting everything on one pan keeps the oven working efficiently and cuts down on prep and cleanup.

5. Keep butter on the counter (short-term)

In cooler winter kitchens, butter softens safely at room temperature for easier baking and spreading.

6. Warm plates before serving



Slide plates into the oven for a minute or set them near the stove so food stays hot longer at the table.

7. Double recipes on purpose

Make extra soup, chili, or casseroles. Leftovers mean fewer cold evenings standing in the kitchen later in the week.

8. Store root vegetables correctly

Keep onions, potatoes, and squash in a cool, dark spot so they

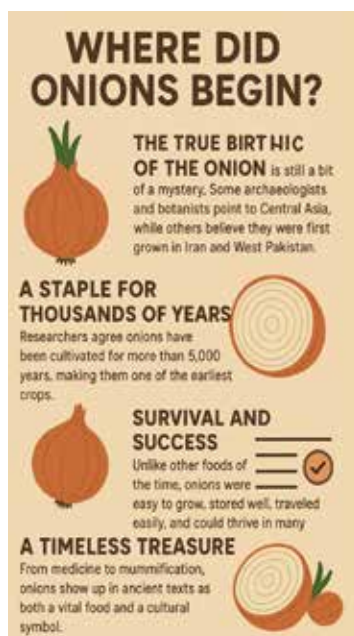
last longer and are always ready for last-minute meals.

9. Use lids to control heat

Keeping lids on pots speeds cooking, traps warmth, and helps the kitchen stay cozy without cranking the heat.

10. Bake something simple—even if dinner's done

A quick batch of biscuits or a pan of roasted apples warms the house and makes winter nights feel extra homey.



Did You Know?

While their exact origin remains somewhat of a mystery, onions may be one of the first cultivated crops, referenced in Chinese gardens 5,000 years ago.

Cuisine of the Middle Ages regularly contained beans, cabbage and onions.

In addition to serving as a food for the poor and the wealthy, onions were pre-

scribed to alleviate headaches, snake bites and hair loss.

They were also used as rent payments and wedding gifts.

The Roman gourmet Apicius, credited with writing one of the first cookbooks (dating back to the 8th and 9th centuries) included many references to onions.

Consumption of onions may prevent gastric ulcers by inhibiting the growth of ulcer-forming micro-organism *Helicobacter pylori*. This is significant because good "gut health" is strongly associated with prevention of chronic diseases and healthy aging.

Valentine's Day Dinner at Home: Cozy, easy recipes

Valentine's Day doesn't have to mean fighting for a reservation or paying restaurant prices for a meal you could've made better at home. This year, skip the crowds and lean into something quieter, warmer, and way more personal. Cooking together (or for each other) can feel just as special—without the noise, the wait, or the bill shock at the end.

The key? Keep it simple, affordable, and comforting. Below are three easy dinner plans—Latino-inspired, Italian, and Asian—built around onions for big flavor without extra fuss. Pick one, light a candle, and let the night unfold.

Dinner Plan #1: Latino-Inspired Comfort

Crusty Caramelized Onion Polenta

This dish feels a little rustic, a little romantic, and very satisfying. The slow-cooked onions bring natural sweetness, while the polenta bakes up crisp on the outside and creamy inside. It's the kind of meal that invites you to linger at the table.

Caramelized onions are folded directly into the polenta, along with marjoram, rosemary, and grated Parmesan or Romano. Once chilled, the polenta is cut into triangles and baked until golden and crusty. Spoon warm tomato sauce onto the plate, layer the polenta on top, and finish with a generous mound of caramelized onions.

For a Valentine's dinner, serve it as an entrée with sautéed zucchini or spinach cooked in olive oil with garlic and pine nuts. Add a glass of red wine or sparkling water with citrus, and you've got a meal that feels thoughtful without being heavy.

Why it works: Polenta is inexpensive, onions do the heavy lifting for flavor, and the make-ahead option means less stress once the night starts.

Dinner Plan #2: Italian Night In Pesto-Onion-Ricotta Lasagna Rolls

If you want something that looks impressive but doesn't require complicated steps, lasagna rolls are the move. They plate beautifully and feel celebratory without needing a giant baking dish.

This version layers sautéed onions into a rich filling made from ricotta, cream cheese, Parmesan, and pesto.

The noodles are rolled up, baked until warm and creamy, and topped with fire-roasted tomato sauce and roasted red onion wedges.

The onions show up twice—soft and savory in the filling, then sweet and tender on top—adding depth without extra ingredients. Finish with a sprinkle of fresh herbs and a little extra cheese.

Serve with a simple green salad and crusty bread. Dessert can be as easy as chocolate-covered strawberries or a shared scoop of gelato.

Why it works: It's cozy, filling, and feels like something you'd order out—but costs far less and tastes just as indulgent.

Dinner Plan #3: Asian-Inspired Date Night

Hot and Spicy Onion Beef Short on time but still want bold flavor? This stir-fry delivers. Thin-sliced flank steak cooks quickly, while onions, garlic, and dried red chilies bring heat and aroma.

The beef marinates briefly in soy sauce and cornstarch, keeping it tender. Once stir-fried, everything gets coated in a glossy, savory sauce that clings to each bite. The onions soften but keep a little bite, balancing the richness of the beef.

Serve over steamed rice or alongside simple noodles. Add a cucumber salad or steamed broccoli if you want something fresh on the side.

Why it works: Fast, flavorful, and perfect for couples who'd rather eat sooner than later.

The Takeaway

Valentine's Day at home isn't about cutting corners—it's about choosing comfort, connection, and food that feels good to share. Whether you go cozy Italian, spice-forward Asian, or warm and rustic with polenta, these meals prove you don't need complicated plans to make the



Crusty Caramelized Onion Polenta



Hot and Spicy Onion Beef



Pesto-Onion-Ricotta Lasagna Rolls

night memorable.

Sometimes the best date is already waiting in your kitchen.

Cooking Together: Winter Weekend Fun for Kids

Winter weekends can feel long when kids are stuck indoors. Screens, boredom, and cabin fever often take over—but one simple solution turns chilly days into fun, productive time: cooking together. Bringing children into the kitchen not only keeps them busy, it teaches valuable skills and makes meals more exciting for everyone.

Start small and simple

Begin with recipes that are easy, forgiving, and hands-on. Think fruit salads, muffins, scrambled eggs, or homemade pizza. Let kids measure, stir, and sprinkle toppings. Even simple tasks like washing vegetables, tearing lettuce, or cracking eggs give them a sense of accomplishment.

Make it sensory

Cooking engages all five senses. Let children smell herbs, feel dough, hear the sizzle of onions, and taste as they go. Sensory experiences make cooking memorable—and they're more likely to try new foods when they've helped prepare them.

Use weekends as mini cooking classes

Designate one or two winter weekend mornings as “kid cooking time.” Pick a theme or cuisine—breakfast-for-dinner, taco night, or comfort soups. Rotate roles so each child gets a turn chopping, stirring, or plating. You'll see confidence—and independence—grow quickly.

Teach safety while keeping it fun

Talk about sharp knives, hot surfaces, and proper hygiene, but frame it as part of the adventure. Kids enjoy being “official chefs” with rules to follow. Use kid-friendly tools like plastic knives, silicone spatulas, or oven mitts sized for little hands.

Incorporate creativity

Encourage kids to customize dishes. Let them choose toppings, mix-ins, or garnishes. Simple touches—like arranging veggies on a pizza in a fun shape or decorating cupcakes—give them pride in the final dish.

Celebrate the results

Sit down together to enjoy the meal you made. Praise effort over perfection and highlight how much they contributed. Photos or a “chef of the weekend” certificate can turn



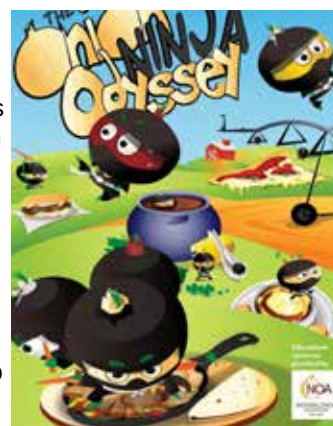
the experience into a lasting memory.

Winter weekends don't have to feel long or dreary. Cooking together keeps kids engaged, teaches practical skills, and adds warmth and laughter to your home. By turning the kitchen into a playground, you're feeding more than just appetites—you're feeding confidence, creativity, and family connection.



Download activities book

The Onion Ninja Odyssey is a downloadable coloring book that teaches the nutrition basics of onions while taking readers through a fun journey of how The Onion – Nature's Ninja has come to be. From the field to your plate, the onion has a wonderful journey that spans the agricultural ages, resulting in a powerful ninja, whose skills keep those who eat it safe, while providing solid nutrition and disease-fighting properties.



Blog

Why Onions are Good for Your Heart

Onions are the backbone of flavor in kitchens everywhere. They're what make soups richer, sauces deeper, and weeknight dinners taste like you actually tried. That same onion doing all that work for flavor is also doing your heart a favor.

A big reason has to do with antioxidants. Onions are full of them, especially one called quercetin. You don't need to remember the name—just know it helps calm inflammation in the body. Over time, inflammation can wear down blood vessels and make it easier for plaque to build up. Foods that help cool things off, like onions, support healthier blood flow.

Onions also get their bite from natural sulfur compounds. They're what make onions smell like onions—and they've been linked to helping blood vessels relax. When that happens, blood moves more easily, which can help keep blood pressure in a healthier range without you having to think about it.

Cholesterol is another place onions can quietly help. Regularly eating onions has been associated with lower levels of LDL cholesterol (the kind you want less of) while supporting HDL cholesterol (the kind you want more of). That balance helps protect arteries over time and lowers the risk of heart problems later on.

They also bring fiber into the mix. It's not a huge amount, but it adds up, especially if onions show up in your meals most days. Fiber helps carry excess cholesterol out of the body and keeps blood sugar from swinging too wildly—both of which matter for heart health.

The best part is how easy onions are to use. You're probably already cooking with them. Add them to soups, eggs, rice dishes, pasta sauces, tacos—pretty much anything savory. Roast them until they're soft and sweet,



or caramelize them to add flavor without piling on extra salt or sugar.

Raw or cooked, onions still count. Raw onions have a bit more of certain nutrients, but cooked onions still deliver plenty of goodness. Comfort food doesn't have to be off the table.

In the end, onions are doing double duty. They make food taste better and support your heart at the same time. Not bad for something that's almost always sitting in the produce drawer.

Meet an Oregon farming Family - The Maags

Most of us don't give much thought to where our food comes from.

We grab onions at the grocery store, toss them into a pan, and move on with our day. But behind those everyday ingredients are families who spend their lives caring for the land and making sure food shows up on our tables—year after year.

For the Maag family of eastern Oregon, farming isn't just a job. It's a responsibility they've carried for generations to care for 2,200 acres of crops that directly feed consumers.

The Maags operate Y1 Farms along with Jamieson Produce, an onion packing facility where onions grown on their 350 acres are cleaned, packed, and shipped to stores throughout the region. Doug Maag, the family patriarch, oversees the operation, while his wife works right alongside him, doing payroll and the books; his son Corey manages the day-to-day work in the fields. In addition to onions, the farm produces sugar beets, hay, wheat, and corn. The family also raises and feeds 6,500 head of cattle — another piece of the food system that helps feed American families.

At the heart of everything they do is faith.

"Faith in God is very important to our family and has guided us through both challenges and successes," said Kimi Maag, Corey's sister, who handles administrative work for both the farm and the packing shed.

People matter just as much as crops. Many employees have been with the Maags for decades—long enough to have watched Corey and Kimi grow up. "We truly consider our employees family," Kimi said. The group celebrates life together, marking birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, quinceañeras, and the end of harvest season side by side.

The family's story began in the 1930s, when the Maag brothers purchased their first farm. The



farm eventually landed in Doug's hands to run with his family. In the 1980s, the Maags expanded by buying neighboring land, a move that helped secure the future of the operation.

Over the last 40 years, they've continued to grow by adding a packing facility and steadily updating it to meet modern standards.

Those updates aren't about shortcuts—they're about safety. Farming today means following strict food safety rules and undergoing regular audits.

"Produce grown in the United States is among the safest food in the world," Kimi said. "Farmers work hard to meet food safety standards, protect water supplies, and care for the land. We have to — our livelihoods depend on it."

Even as regulations change and farming becomes more complicated, the Maags keep adapting. Through it all, their goal remains simple: grow food responsibly, care for the land, and provide families with ingredients they can trust.

The next time you slice an onion for dinner, there's a good chance a story like this helped bring it to your kitchen.

