



## Using, Storing and Preserving

# Leeks



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*Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Leeks* was first published in February 2013 and revised in June 2023.

*Michigan grown leeks are available in the market year-round but are at their peak from September through April.*



The leek is a member of the onion family, although it does not form a bulb. Leeks have a bundle of leaf sheaths that are sometimes referred to as a stalk or stem. It resembles an overgrown green onion. The leek has leaves similar to those of the garlic plant — flat rather than round. Both the leaves and stems of the leek plant may be eaten. They have a mild onion-like flavor and are often used to flavor soups, or dried and added to herb mixtures.

Leeks can be grown from seeds or transplanted as onions are. Because of their long growing season — 70 to 120 days — they are more often planted as seedlings than grown from seeds. They are cold-tolerant and can be put in the ground before the last frost. They are available in the market year round but are at their peak from September through April.

Select leeks that are firm, with crisp stalks, free from blemishes. The tops should be bright-colored and fresh-looking, not dry. Avoid leeks with yellow or withered tops.

## Food Safety and Storage

- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- The interlacing leaves make leeks a difficult vegetable to clean thoroughly before preparation.
- Wash leeks under cool running water to remove the grit found between the leaves.
- Leeks can give off an odor that can be absorbed by other foods in the refrigerator. Therefore, wrap leeks in plastic when storing in the refrigerator.
- Do not trim or wash before storing.
- Leeks will last up to two weeks in the refrigerator if they are purchased fresh.
- For best quality and to preserve nutrients, preserve no more than your family can consume in one year.

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## Yield:

1 pound	=	6 cups raw leaves
		1¼ cups cooked leaves

## Preserving

Leeks do not freeze well. They develop a strong, bitter flavor. Freezing also makes leeks mushy. *Michigan State University Extension does not recommend canning leeks* because the high heat of pressure canning turns the product to mush. They can be dried. Wash well and cut in ¼-inch slices. Dry at 145 degrees F until crisp.

## References

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