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SIMMER DOWN

Why simmer? **Simmering** is a key **cooking method** often underestimated for its ability to **infuse and meld flavors** in certain food preparations.

Bypassing a **simmering step** in particular dishes can leave them too wet, too bland or too raw.

As a dish simmers slowly, the flavors from **herbs, spices, and meats** diffuse into the liquid. As the liquid slowly evaporates, those flavors are infused into ingredients like **vegetables**.

Foods which are **simmered** will have a more **concentrated flavor**, resulting in a better finished dish. It's also a good way to **gently cook** an ingredient until it softens.

Simmering requires cooking food in liquid that is just **below boiling point**. It is characterized by small bubbles that rise to the surface of the liquid. It is mostly used for dishes that require a longer cooking time, like stews, soups, and braises.

Think of it as **cooking low, slow** and **gently** to build depth of flavors. Simmering a popular method for **slow cooking, braising, and making reductions**.

Sautéing, on the other hand, refers to cooking food quickly in a small amount of hot fat, usually oil or butter. The temperature is hotter than a simmer, and is characterized by the food being cooked quickly and constantly stirred. It is mostly used for dishes that require a shorter cooking time, like **vegetables, meat and fish**.



Most recipes call for **two primary methods** of simmering. Avoid over-cooking.

Either heat to a rapid boil then reduce the temperature down to a simmer or to slowly work your way up from a low to a medium heat and then maintain it. Be clear on recipe directions for best results.

Lid on or off? Simmer with the lid on when you want to speed up cooking, prevent moisture loss, or increase heat. Simmer with the **lid off** when you want to avoid boiling, prevent boiling, or reduce and thicken sauces. If a sauce is too thick, thin it down by adding more liquid.

When **simmering vegetables**, combine the fresh ingredients with herbs and spices in a liquid. Bring salted water or broth to a simmer on low to medium heat on the stovetop, then add the ingredients. Cook the vegetables for a longer time to gently soften the texture and enhance the flavors.

Root vegetables, such as **beets, potatoes, sweet potatoes, rutabagas** and **turnips** tend to work well because simmering softens their starchy, fibrous texture. **Vegetable stock** can also be made using a simmering method.

Learn what a simmer looks like., then **simmer down** with fall flavors.



Holiday Floral: We are taking floral **PRE-BOOKS** for Thanksgiving Plants, Poinsettias, Bouquets and Arrangements. **Pre-books due by Wednesday, October 25th.** Deliveries begin week of November 13th. Contact your GP Salesperson for more floral details at 916.441.6431.

Apples & Pears: There continues to be an overlap of *old crop* and *new crop* apples in the pipeline. Beware of pricing that is indicative of older lots versus the newly harvested apples. We have plenty of variety, including **Honeycrisp, Opal, and Modi apples** along with traditional favorites. Bulk and bagged fruit is available for retail and foodservice needs.



California pears are nearing end of harvest season. The northwest is harvesting all types— **Bartlett, Anjou, Bosc** and specialty.

Avocados: Our avocados are all from *Mexico* now. Costs are continuing to slide down at more affordable prices than in recent

past weeks.

Berries: **Blueberry** demand far exceeds available supply. Growers are enacting *force majeure* for all contracts. This lack of supply is due to El Nino weather events that affected *Peruvian* and *Argentinean* production areas several weeks ago. As much as 50 percent of supplies are down in both areas. **Raspberry** production out West is very light and declining weekly. Over the next few weeks, a slight increase should begin. Light numbers are beginning to make their way to the border out of *Central Mexico*.

Strawberry harvest quantities in *Salinas* and *Watsonville* are on a steady decline as the season draws to a close. There is a slow increase in new crop fruit in *Santa Maria* and *Oxnard*, though all regions are in demand of this fruit. Quality is good. Due to the very wet winter experienced this past year, very limited **blackberry** quantities are being harvested in the *Central Coast California* regions. There is barely enough production coming out of *Central Mexico* and *Baja* to meet current demand.



Citrus: Long awaited **California Navel oranges** are primed for harvests. **Booth Ranches** will begin packing November 6th and **Sunkist growers** looks to start the following week. The gap between domestic

Valencias and **Navels** will be felt between now and then. Imported fruit, both navels and mandarins, will eek us through. Early fruit is typically small sized, light and thinned skin.

Lime pricing remains elevated on all sizes, particularly large, in a *demand exceeds* situation. Limes have moved to the new growing areas, and we continue to see the impacts to the new bloom impacted by severe weather events over the last few months. Light **lemon** supplies are holding prices up. Look for District 3 to get going in better numbers to add some relief.



Grapes: A couple of **NEW** varieties to offer this week **Sweet Celebration** (Item # 6634) and **Moon Drop grapes** (Item # 12113), both 19 pound units. Add these to the California fall grape lineup, including **Holiday Seedless** and **Cotton**

Candy Grapes. Sweet Celebration

is a crossbreed between **Red Globe** and **Princess grapes**. They are harvested just as the leaves begin to turn color. Super sweet and seedless, these are a truly sweet celebration of the change of seasons. Enjoy them soon as they are available for a short period.



Moon Drop grapes are a **seedless** variety with an elongated, tubular shape that ends in a characteristic dimple at the bottom. With **dark purple**, almost black skins, and a juicy green interior, these all-natural grapes have a super sweet taste.

Melons: **Cantaloupe** sizing in the final fields has started to settle from the peak of jumbo fruit we have experienced the past two weeks. Early *Yuma* reports imply a return to a larger size profile (9s and larger) ahead. Hot Arizona temperatures have resulted in fruit sizing up. Flexibility of sizing will be helpful.

Honeydew production from *California* is finishing fast and quickly reaching a *demand exceeds supply* situation fruit. *Yuma* will start by the end of month and *Mexican* production, crossing through *Nogales*, has begun. Primary sizing on the Mexican fruit is leaning more to 6s with larger fruit tighter. **Watermelon** markets are tighter with most local deals finished. We've moved out of bins and into cartons this week. Overall quality is good out of *California* and *Mexico*.



Seasonals: **Pomegranates, persimmons** and **cranberries** are all available for fall menus. **Mangoes** are now imported from *Brazil*. Fruit is tight and hard to come by. Prices are high and will go

higher as less volume is coming in the next few weeks. **Organic mangoes** won't be available until the first week of November.

Crop Outlook: The seasonal transition to Huron has started this week with Iceberg and some leafy lettuces. Yuma will be right behind on the schedule.

Seasonally warm overnight temperatures in California look to continue into next week. Mold mildew and fungal disease pressure continue to impact many crops especially lettuce and leafy green stands across the valley. Insect pressure will be on the rise as temperatures increase and the season winds down

Civil unrest in Guatemala over a disputed election has caused protests across the country paralyzing the movement of products as roads and ports remain shut off. Numerous crops will be impacted by these weather and political events and near-term shortages are anticipated.

Broccoli, Cauliflower & Celery: Prices are falling and dramatically for **cauliflower** from last week to this week. Demand is off and conventional product is in good shape supply wise. **Organic cauliflower** market is still tight, but we're seeing price increases starting to slow down. **OG Broccoli** market is snuggling up; prices are rising.

Lettuces: **Iceberg** lettuce and romaine stands will likely see an increase in fringe and tip burn along with seeder and lesser texture in the upcoming harvests. **Organic leaf and greens** are holding steady. Desert transition is quickly approaching so pricing is likely to rise as we get closer.



Mixed Vegetables: Most mixed **veggies** are enjoying a good supply situation, good quality and very good pricing. This includes **Brussels sprouts, summer and winter squashes, bell**

peppers, and green beans. Our local **Vierra Farms** is still going with local **sweet corn** for a couple of weeks. They are keeping us in stock with corn and also **pumpkins and fall ornamentals.**

Supply of **green onions** is improving and the market is slowing down. This market will continue to adjust downward and supplies will improve.

Artichokes, asparagus and carrots are on the other side of the spectrum; tighter supply. **Carrots** in pack sizes Jumbo 25# & 50#, Cello, and OG Cello are all still being pro-rated.

We are seeing very light **chili pepper** volume as the growing regions in *Mexico* are recovering from Hurricane Lidia. **Serrano, Poblano, and Habanero** seem the shortest. There is some volume out of *Baja* which seems to be improving post-Hilary. *California* production remains hit or miss. **Tomatillos** look to firm up. Quality will be fair at best on all varieties. **Mini sweet peppers** are in good supply and good quality.

Onions & Potatoes: **Onion** markets have settled out in *Northwest*. **White onions** remain in tight supply and their elevated price shows it. We are seeing much better size on **yellow onions**, with **Colossal** and **Super Colossal** sizes being in good supply. The market has remained relatively stagnant and steady across the board on all colors and sizes. Prices remain firm.

Potato markets are optimistic this season on yields, sizing and quality. Prices are flat and early russet sizing is on the larger size 40-70 range.



VEGETABLE STOCK MADE WITH VEGETABLE SCRAPS

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 gallon bag vegetable scraps
- 12 1/2 cups water

METHOD: Place vegetable scraps in large Dutch oven or stock pot. Cover with water and **simmer for 1 hour** over low heat.



Remove mixture from heat and strain out liquid using a fine mesh colander.

Store liquid in airtight container for up to 4 days in refrigerator or up to 6 months in freezer until ready to use.

- ◆ *Vegetable stock is a great way to get the most out of your vegetables and infuse a variety of dishes from soups to rice with extra flavor. Long considered a restorative food, vegetable stock contains a variety of nutrients with very few calories and is a healthy addition to any diet.*
- ◆ Making vegetable stock all starts with collecting vegetable scraps. Chopping an onion for spaghetti sauce? Great, save the skins – they add beautiful color and extra nutrients to stocks. Dicing a cucumber for tonight's salad? Keep the peels. Each time you cook collect the vegetable scraps and put them in a Ziploc bag in the fridge. When the bag is full it's time to make stock. If you cook from scratch regularly you'll probably have enough scraps to make vegetable stock weekly.

MAKES 12 1/2 Cups

Recipe courtesy of **Carol The Cook**



Enjoy this week's update



MARKET REPORT

For updated prices and availability contact

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**"I watch cooking change the cook,
just as it transforms the food"**
– Laura Esquivel

