

The Sweet Smell of Garlic



The first time I tasted roasted, whole garlic was in a restaurant called Bistro 110. This was about 1983. My best friend had ordered it for us to share.

I sat stunned, staring at it when it arrived at the table.

The waiter set down a plate that had a whole bulb of garlic on it. The top was cut off and there was olive oil drizzled over it. Bread pieces came with it. The smell was divine, but it looked like a sloppy mess to eat and I didn't have a clue where to start.

My friend Michele realized, that even as a foodie, I had no clue what to do.

"You just eat it like this," she said as she demonstrated taking her fork and using a prong to pull out one clove of the warm, soft garlic and spread it across a piece of French bread.

I caught on, but I still wrinkled up my nose.

My only experience with garlic was in things like lasagna. I knew how pungent garlic could be if you used too much. I made that mistake once.

I had visions of putting a bite of that in my mouth and getting a fiery garlic flavor that would be overwhelming. Almost hot even.

I bucked up and dug in because Michele was way ahead of me already and she wasn't even reaching for her water glass, so I thought it must be okay.

My first bite was quite a surprise. The squishy garlic was no longer pungent. It had taken on a smooth texture and aroma. Almost sweet. I didn't even feel like I was going to get bad breath from it. It had a whole new flavor profile after being roasted in oil.

I've been a fan ever since.

With this offering, I'm going to relate an assortment of things I have learned about garlic over the years.

Elephant Garlic: This is easy and says it all in the name. In your store, you'll usually find two kinds of garlic. The regular size and then near it you might find elephant garlic. Elephant garlic is much bigger. It's also milder (even raw) than regular garlic. If I am going to caramelize garlic I usually buy elephant garlic (more on caramelizing it later).

Scapes: Scapes are the blossoms that form above ground when you grow garlic. You might find those in fancy, gourmet stores. They taste more like scallions and fancy restaurants will use them to garnish soups and salads. They are really pretty. When grown longer they can even be put on display in a vase.



Garlic scapes are yummy, too!

When to use fresh garlic: My purist friends will say it's important to use fresh garlic at all times. I just don't have time to peel fresh garlic every time and anytime I do it makes my fingernails smell like garlic for a few days. I'm not giving up on my manicures so sometimes I don't peel garlic. Last night I got my husband to do it. If the dish you are going to cook involves really bright, fresh ingredients, use fresh garlic for sure. You'll notice the difference.

When to use jar garlic: In grocery stores, you'll find minced garlic and chopped garlic in jars. I use that pretty often. You choose your preference based on whether you want to see chunks or if you want it to blend into the sauce smoothly. If I am

making something heavier like a lasagna I see no reason not to use garlic from a jar. One teaspoon of jar garlic will mimic one large clove.

When to use powdered garlic: My opinion on this has changed. I used to save powdered garlic only for things like quick garlic bread. Then I watched my friend James cook. James is a chef. He lived in Italy for 12 years and specializes in Italian cooking at his restaurant, Pisolino in Chicago. James gets out his big jar of powdered garlic and pours it into just about anything on his stove. I was shocked. I thought he'd fall into the purist category. Nope. So now I've taken up using powdered garlic in things like soups. It's so easy.

Roasted Garlic: I'm going to give you the recipe for roasted garlic but I will also describe it here, too. It's that simple. Just cut off the fuzzy top of the garlic down far enough that you'll be able to see the cut side of most of the cloves nestled in the wrapper. I cut down about an inch from the top. Use a sharp knife or if you slip you might slice yourself.

Get out a square of aluminum foil and place the garlic flatter side down on the foil. Drizzle 1 or 2 Tbl of extra virgin olive oil over the top and wrap the garlic in the foil like a pouch.

I place it in another dish in case any oil oozes out. I don't want that on the bottom of my oven, burning.

Then roast the garlic for about 30 minutes at 400 degrees. And voila. You can check to make sure it's done by poking it with a sharp paring knife. If the knife slides in easily the garlic will be soft to eat. It's ready. Let it cool a bit so you don't burn your mouth. If you want to keep the carbs down, serve it with seed crackers instead of bread.

Caramelized Garlic: When I caramelize garlic I try to use elephant garlic. All I do is peel it and cut the large cloves

into one-inch chunks. I put it in a small oven-proof pan and drizzle a generous amount of extra virgin olive oil over the top and roast that in my oven, uncovered, for about 30 – 40 minutes. With this one, I am leaving it in there until it begins to brown on the edges. That makes it even milder. You can serve this just like you do with the regular garlic or if I am going decadent I might pop the whole amount into a large batch of mashed potatoes. The caramelized garlic will break up and spread throughout the potatoes. The olive oil is the substitute for butter and all you need is salt and if you like it, pepper. I have served this to rave reviews at big dinner parties. Caramelized garlic is so smooth in taste it almost adds a sweetness to the dish. Your garlic-loving friends and family will love it.

Garlic is also easy to grow in your garden. I've never done it. I don't go through that much garlic but if you do, you should consider growing it yourself. Here's a link about it that I found quite interesting and really easy to follow.

<https://happydihome.com/growing-garlic/>

Enjoy!

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in pink ink that reads "Zola". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'Z' and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is visible near the end of the signature.



Super easy. Mega delicious.

Roasted Garlic

Plan Z Phase: This is a Z2 (ZReduction) Recipe.

This is a super-easy way to roast garlic. Once roasted, garlic no longer tastes hot and pungent. It mellows as it roasts and can even be made into a spread. You could also add some of this roasted garlic to a batch of cooked green beans or asparagus for a nice flavor combo.

Ingredients:

- 1 bulb of regular garlic
- 1 – 2 Tbl of olive oil

Directions:

Just cut off the fuzzy top of the garlic down far enough that you'll be able to see the cut side of most of the cloves nestled in the wrapper. I cut down about an inch from the top. Use a sharp knife or if you slip you might slice yourself.

Get out a square of aluminum foil and place the garlic flat side down on the foil. Drizzle 1 or 2 Tbl of extra virgin olive oil over the cut top and wrap the garlic in the foil like a pouch. I place it in another dish in case any oil oozes out. You don't want that on the bottom of your oven, burning.

Then roast the garlic for about 30 minutes at 400 degrees. And voila. You can check to make sure it's done by poking it with a sharp paring knife. If it slides easily the garlic will be soft to eat. It's ready. Open the foil. You can take it out of the foil or leave it in. Your choice. Let it cool a bit so you don't burn your mouth. Serve it with seed crackers to keep it very low carb. If it's a splurge occasion you can serve this with small slices of French bread.

Enjoy!

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Zola' with a stylized flourish at the end.