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**From seed to table, Idaho-E. Oregon delivers Spanish Sweet perfection**

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By

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Growers and shippers in the Treasure Valley of Idaho-E. Oregon have spent generations perfecting their craft — planting, nurturing, harvesting, storing, packing and delivering big, beautiful Spanish Sweet storage onions.

With approximately 20,000 acres planted annually, Idaho-E. Oregon's Treasure Valley region is the largest storage onion-growing area in the nation. Many of the family farms in the Valley are now in their third and fourth generations, and growers have become experts in producing the famed large yellow, red and white onions.

So, too, have the dozens of shippers perfected their operations, staying ahead of the technological curve to provide the best product to the end users in foodservice, retail and processing.

The industry is led by the Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee, which was established under Federal Marketing Order #958 in 1957. The Committee represents more than 300 growers and 30 shippers, and from its 20,000 acres the area ships an average of 24,000 carlots — 40,000 pounds per carlot or more than 1 billion pounds total — of onions annually.

Considered a powerhouse for both production and quality, the Treasure Valley boasts a nine-month shipping season. The Spanish Sweets size bigger than many other varieties, have tight skins and great “tastes like an onion” flavor.

In addition, the all-purpose Spanish Sweets are known for their cooking qualities. Compared to their sweet fresh-market counterparts, which are available for a shorter period, onions from Idaho-E. Oregon contain more solids and less water. When cooked, the Spanish Sweets retain much of their texture.

Simply put, these long-storing, big and beautiful onions are perfect for both foodservice and retail.

Palate-wise, onions are so firmly established in the minds of home cooks, fast-food operators and white tablecloth chefs that not having them is unthinkable.

“Because onions are seldom bought on impulse, reach the consumer through in-store ads and other marketing channels including social media to boost sales. In store promotions are also important as they can serve to remind consumers to stock up,” the National Onion Association notes on its website, [www.onions-usa.org](http://www.onions-usa.org).

Foodservice pros are quick to comment on the indispensability of onions, one of the top five most consumed fresh vegetable in the United States. They add immeasurably to the flavor, color, and

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texture in virtually every cuisine, as shown throughout this publication.

And as consumption increases, so does demand. According to figures from the NOA, onions represent the third largest fresh vegetable industry in the United States. The U.S. per capita consumption of onions in 2018 was 20.39 pounds per year, which is a 101 percent increase in consumption since 1970.

Ancient Babylonians were so enamored with onions that they chiseled the very first “written recipe” into stone. Moses described the Israelites who’d fled Egypt as being disgruntled during their wilderness trek due to lack of onions in Numbers 11:5. So we know mankind has enjoyed the pungent snap of raw and the umami mellowness of cooked onions have pleased us for millennia.

And for decades Idaho-E. Oregon onion growers and shippers have been providing the retail and foodservice markets with excellent quality, size and flavor — Spanish Sweets from the Treasure Valley. Look to IEO when you’re looking for excellence!

[Kathleen Thomas Gaspar](#)

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## About Kathleen Thomas Gaspar |

Kathleen is a Colorado native and has been writing about produce for more than three decades and has been a professional journalist for more than four decades. Over the years she's covered a cornucopia of crops grown both in the United States and abroad, and she's visited dozens of states – traveling by car from her home base in Colorado to the Northwest and Southeast, as far as Vancouver, BC, and Homestead, FL. Now semi-retired, Kathleen continues to write about produce and is also penning an ongoing series of fiction novels. She's a wife, mother of two grown sons and grandmother of six, and she and her fly fisherman husband Abe reside in the Banana Belt town of Cañon City.

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