

GARLIC TYPES

Carpathian (Polish) Rocamboles grow better in cold winter gardens.

Carpathian came from the mountains of the same name in Southeast Poland and is sometimes called Polish Carpathian. It is a generally good sized though not a particularly large garlic. Being a Rocambole garlic, its flavor is very strong, hot and spicy and sticks around for a long time. From a growers perspective, it grows well in cold winter areas and usually grows healthy surprisingly uniform sized bulbs. It has thin bulb wrappers that have a lot of purple and brown in them along with some reddish-orange veins.

The Marbled Group of Purple Stripes

Great bulbs of fire! **Metechi** is one of the most fabulous garlicks in the world, in my view. These are huge garlicks with a flavor that is even bigger. They are close to the size of the largest Artichokes and beautiful enough to put on a pedestal in an art museum. They have five to seven monstrously large cloves that will blow your socks off. I think they're even hotter than Skuri #2 but seem to have a more pleasant lingering aftertaste. These great fireballs store much better, firmer and longer than the standard group and grow much better for us as well. **Metechi's** bulb wrappers are thick, luxuriant and parchment-like and the outer ones are very, very white. As you peel away the outer wrappers more and more purple striping shows up and they become almost solid purple by the time you get down to the cloves. The clove covers are dark brown with purple streaks and long sharp pointed tips.

When I taste tested this magnificent beast, my face turned very red, tears welled up and I broke out into an instant profuse sweat and I thought fire was coming out of my nose and ears. I had to breathe in through my mouth and out through my nose in an effort to cool the heat, which subsided after a minute or so. It took almost an hour for the hair on the back of my neck to dry. I don't know if I had an extra large bite due to the size of the clove or what, but I gained a wholesome respect for this garlic. The aftertaste was warm pleasing and garlicky, but not unpleasant. Its flavor seems to hold up well in cooking.

Metechi has been the best growing garlic in our garden every year we have grown it. A few years ago Mother Nature toying with the weather all but wiped out many of our cultivars, Metechi and Bogatyr prospered as usual while within fifty feet of it, two other Marbled Purple Stripes, Brown Rose and Brown Tempest, barely survived. Its foliage is a deep dark green with a definite purplish haze and large, thick and healthy looking. If you love big, beautiful, bold and powerful garlic that grows like a weed and stores like a rock, this is the one for you. It matures very late and is one of the last garlicks we harvest.

Silverskin Garlicks

Silverskin garlicks are in a class by themselves, literally, and in several ways; they are the last garlicks to mature each season and they store the longest. There is also a great range of tastes, pungency and onset of pungency, clove color, leaf color and size as well as time of maturity. No other garlicks braid better than Silverskins. Silverskins are great garlicks for all the reasons outlined above but also because they will grow well in most of the USA, what's not to like?

Silverskin garlicks are usually, but not always, the ones that you see in braids. Silverskins are generally the longest storing of all garlicks and have a soft pliable neck that lends itself to braiding and holds up over time better than the artichokes whose necks tend to deteriorate earlier than the silverskins.

They are usually very richly flavored in garlickiness and anywhere from mild to hot in pungency. S & H Silverskin, for example, has a musky, earthy garlickiness with very little bite when eaten raw, whereas Locati can be fiery hot some years. Silverwhite also has a richness to it and seems almost mellow for 15 to 20 seconds and then you experience an intense heat rush that lasts for about 30 to 45 seconds. **Nootka Rose** has that same richness but with only a medium heat. I have been amazed at the variation in tastes and flavors I have found in Silverskins.

Among Silverskins, the more they have in common, the more different they become. All are different.

This Northwest heirloom garlic from the San Juan Island in Washington state has medium to large bulbs, 15-24 cloves per bulb which are streaked red on mahogany. Its flavor is strong. In rich soil cloves can lose their rosy hue. Very attractive for braiding.

Rocambole garlicks tend to have thinner bulb wrappers than other ophios and lots of purple striping and splotches. Some of them are not as white as other ophios and seem to have a brownish cast to them, in fact, some of them almost look as though they need a bath. What they lack in beauty, they make up for in taste. Other rocamboles have sharp, vivid colors that alert the consumer to their strong, rich and deep flavor. Many people (including Ron Engeland-author of "Growing Great Garlic") consider them their favorite garlicks. In the spring they send up a scape (stalk) that forms a complete double loop. (They're the only garlicks that do a double loop.) They have usually seven to nine cloves arranged in circular fashion about a central scape and have few or no smaller internal cloves. Did I mention flavor? Their flavor must be experienced to be believed - its depth is remarkable. They have a deep earthy muskiness about them that few other garlicks have and they are fiery when eaten raw.