



Produce Profile: RADICCHIO & CHICORY



WHERE DID RADICCHIO AND CHICORY FOOD CROPS ORIGINATE?

Hailing from the Veneto region in northeastern Italy, these heads of bitter greens have long been enjoyed by Italians. As a result of centuries of selective breeding practices, modern cultivation began in Italy in the 15th century. Steeped in heritage, varieties were named after the town in Italy from where they emerged.

HOW ARE RADICCHIO AND CHICORY DIFFERENT FROM VARIETIES OF LETTUCE?

While radicchio and chicory are a type of leafy green like lettuce, their shelf-life, color, texture and flavor differ considerably. However, like lettuce, varieties of radicchio and chicory make fantastic salad bases and more! (See below: How can eaters use *radicchio and chicory*?)

Belonging to the *Chicorium* genus, radicchio and chicory are in the daisy family (*Asteraceae*), along with lettuce, Endive, Frisee and dandelion.

WHY ARE SOME VARIETIES REFERRED TO AS RADICCHIO WHILE OTHERS ARE CALLED CHICORY?

While radicchio is a chicory, chicory is not a radicchio.

The chicory family, which radicchios are part of, grows in various forms of tight to looser heads and their flavors range from slightly to more pronounced in bitterness.

While scientific classification has stricter guidelines about which plants are referred to as a radicchio or a chicory, culinary naming conventions are known to break some rules. Historically speaking, “radicchio” has been used to refer to varieties that are red, maroon, purple, pink or with splashes of those hues against a green or yellow leaf. Varieties that are uniform green or yellow have typically been categorized as “chicory.”

Rules will be broken, and the red versus green guide has its flaws. Bianco, for example, a variety composed of uniform green and yellow leaves, has taken on the radicchio moniker in the U.S. Still, one can sometimes find it referred to as a chicory.

WHICH VARIETIES OF RADICCHIO AND CHICORY DOES OGC CARRY?

Currently, OGC offers Bianco, Castelfranco, Chioggia, Costarossa, Lusia, Rosalba and Treviso radicchio as well as Sugarloaf and Puntarelle chicory.

HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE CHIOGGIA?

This ubiquitous variety, often the first eaters in the U.S. are introduced to, is frequently mispronounced. This variety is pronounced: key-OH-jah.

WHERE DOES OGC SOURCE RADICCHIO AND CHICORY, AND WHEN IS IT AVAILABLE?

A few varieties of radicchio, notably Chioggia, are sourced from organic growers in California and Mexico throughout the year.

Then, starting in October and extending into winter, sourcing transitions to the Pacific Northwest, specifically the Skagit Valley in northern Washington. This area has been compared to Veneto as it mirrors the conditions of Italy’s premiere radicchio and chicory growing region.

HOW CAN EATERS USE RADICCHIO AND CHICORY?

The obvious answer is in a salad! But many eaters choose to enjoy radicchio and chicory cooked. Whether raw or cooked, there's a pleasant level of bitterness to meet each eater's preference.

Big fan of bitter? Direct shoppers to maroon and red varieties like Costarossa, Chioggia and Treviso. Lusia also tends to land higher on the bitter scale, as does Puntarelle.

For eaters looking for a more mild flavor, encourage them to try Bianco, Castelfranco, Rosalba and Sugarloaf.

With their hearty texture, many varieties are great for grilling, braising and sauteing. Encourage eaters to experiment with preparation, but some standouts include grilling halved Sugarloaf and braised Treviso!

IS THERE A WAY TO TEMPER THE BITTERNESS?

Pairing these varieties with fat helps to cut the sharpness. Olive oil, cream, cheese, meat and nuts are all great options.

Cooking radicchio or chicory is also a fantastic way to mellow the flavor, particularly when caramelizing with alliums.

A cold water bath can also help temper the bite. This is especially true of Puntarelle, whose traditional preparation calls for a soak in ice water.

WHY THE RECENT UPTICK IN INTEREST IN RADICCHIO AND CHICORY?

In addition to the fact that radicchio and chicory are delicious, nutritious and lovely to look at, there are many great reasons to introduce this category to eaters.

These varieties are fridge-hardy, making them great options for busy shoppers. Unlike leaf lettuce, radicchio and chicory can thrive in the crisper for weeks.

Particularly for eaters and growers in the Pacific Northwest, radicchio and chicory present some special advantages.

Eaters hoping to reduce their carbon footprint and still enjoy salads during the cooler months can look to Northwest-grown radicchio and chicory as an alternative to lettuce from California and Mexico.

Northwest growers benefit from the income these products provide during a time of year when their profits typically decline.

OGC, along with food-focused organizations, growers, farmers markets, retailers, chefs and more, have promoted and expanded this category in the US. We hope you join us in introducing radicchio and chicory to your eaters! A few varieties of radicchio, notably Chioggia, are sourced from organic growers in California and Mexico throughout the year.

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SHARE THIS INFO WITH EATERS

- Varieties of radicchio and chicory are fridge-hardy and can last in the crisper for weeks.
- Bitterness can be tempered by adding fat or an ice bath.
- Varieties of radicchio and chicory can be consumed raw and many are fantastic cooked.
- Radicchio and chicory are a delicious alternative to leaf lettuce in the fall and winter.
- With some varieties available all year long, the greatest diversity occurs from October into the winter and are sourced from Northwest growers.



MERCHANDISING TIPS

- Use POP in displays to help shoppers navigate the nuance of each variety.
- Bring in a variety of sizes, shapes and colors to interest a broad range of eaters, and use brightly-hued varieties as color breaks in the wet rack.
- On the sales floor, cross-merchandise radicchio and chicory varieties with salad components, olive oil, seasonal fruit, a parmesan cheese wheel or cured meat to inspire eaters.
- Set up a demo! Encouraging eaters to try something unfamiliar is the most reliable way to get a head of radicchio or chicory into the shopping cart of a new consumer.
- Have a deli? Partner to provide a radicchio dish that features a variety currently stocked in the produce department.
- Don't put (this category) in a corner! Place radicchio and chicory varieties front and center. Their eye-catching colors and shapes will easily draw in shoppers.

