



COOSEMANS SHIPPING OF LOS ANGELES  
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[WWW.WESHIPPRODUCE.COM](http://WWW.WESHIPPRODUCE.COM)

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## Spring is definitely here.

Ramps (or wild leeks, as they are also known) are a true harbinger of spring – often the first edible plant in the wild forager's harvest. Many years (including this year), wild ramp shoots can be found poking up through the last crust of winter's melting snow.

Right now, it's early spring ramps from West Virginia. These slender ramps have a sweet, but spicy bite and amazing flavor. About the size of a green onion or scallion, these early ramps are a real taste treat. Once cleaned of their root and "button", the entire ramp is edible, sliced raw into salads or cooked in any way you can imagine.



## Ramps or Wild Leeks: What's the difference?

Ramps and Wild Leeks are the same plant (*Allium tricoccum*), a wild-growing member of the onion family (*Alliaceae*), generally seen with the edible small white bulb and the broad green leaves attached. Found as far south as Georgia and north to Canada, they're especially popular in the folk cuisine of the Appalachian mountains when they first emerge early in the spring. Ramps have a spicy exciting flavor, like a combination of onions and garlic. They make a bold statement on salads, in soups or sauces or whole as a garnish.

The names "Ramps" and "Wild Leeks" are differentiated primarily by their different growing regions. Where they are found growing in the south, they are known as Ramps. Harvest in this region typically begins around the middle of March. A few weeks later, the harvest begins in the Great Lakes region where they are called Wild Leeks. Northern Wild Leeks tend to have a larger bulb and a slightly milder flavor than their southern cousins. Wild Leeks deepen and mature their incredible flavor to perfection.

*But... while the taste is much the same, somehow in the north wild leeks never stir up quite the fuss that southern ramps seem to.*

## A Little Ramp History

The European settlers of Appalachia first learned about local wild foods from the Cherokee Indians. The Cherokee considered this early wild onion a tonic and believed them to possess special vitamins, minerals and restorative powers. Ramps still grow prolifically in the traditional Cherokee heartland and gathering ramps in spring is still a ritual among the surviving Eastern Cherokee.

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Springtime Ramps April 2011





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### European Cousins

The early English settlers, well acquainted with a different, but similar European wild onion known as the “ramson” (*Allium ursinum*), called this new food by the familiar name from home. Over time, the word “ramp” evolved – a term with deep roots in the Old World (Middle English *ramsyn* from Old English *hramsan*, “wild garlic”).

Ramps have been relished for springtime dining since early the early pioneer days and were the centerpiece for many a springtime “supper” in early frontier settlements. Believing the ramp to possess the revitalizing power of a spring tonic, the mountain folks looked forward to the return of the ramp after a winter of eating mostly preserved foods. Elders still proclaim that “they’re good for what ails you!”.

#### Did you know that:

The name of the U.S. city Chicago originates from “Checagou” (Chick-Ah-Goo-Ah), which in the Potawatomi language means “wild onions”. The area was so named because of the smell of rotting marshland wild leeks (ramps) that used to cover it.

### Ramps Are Good for You!

#### Ramps are Spring Tonic personified

They’ve traditionally been considered to be a powerful folk medicine said to keep away cold, flu – and the neighbors! The reputation which holds both ramps and wild leeks to be powerful healers turns out to be well deserved. They are high in Vitamins C and A, and are full of healthful minerals. And they have the same cholesterol-reducing capacity found in garlic and other members of this family.

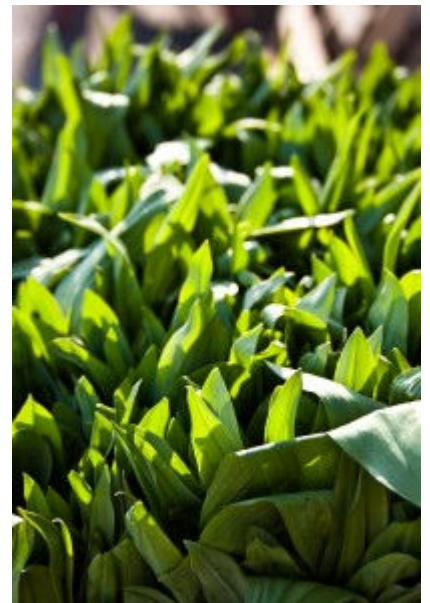
#### A Few Ramp Tips:

Good ramps or wild leeks should have two or three whole bright green leaves with the small white bulb attached by a purplish stem. The leaves are generally about 6 inches long, although ramps tend to be harvested at a somewhat earlier stage than are wild leeks. Depending on where you get them, ramps or wild leeks may be still muddy from the field or all cleaned and trimmed. The key is that they be fresh. Yellowing or withering in the leaves is a sign that they have gone too long.

#### Handling Fresh Ramps/Wild Leeks

A papery wrapper leaf (and some dirt) may surround the bulb and should be pulled off as you would with scallions. Trim away any roots along with their little button attachment. The entire plant is now ready for eating.

Once ramps / wild leeks have been cleaned, store them in the refrigerator tightly wrapped to keep them from drying out (and to protect the rest of the contents of the fridge from the heady aroma). They should keep for a week or more, but use them as soon as possible after harvest.



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