By Nancy Whitaker

THE PLIGHT OF THE ONION

"Give me a big slab of onion on it, please," is something you may say when you order a sandwich in a restaurant.

However, many people even though they might like the taste of onions, don't like the foul mouth odor they get after consuming one. This is especially true if they are going to be smooching on someone.

One belief is that if both parties eat onions, they will not notice any bad mouth odor when getting close to one another. Does anyone know if this is true?

I like onions. I love their taste and I love to cook with them. To me making a pot of chili without onions, just doesn't seem right.

However, the poor onion does get a bad rap. One of my daughters will not even touch an onion, much less eat one. I am wondering also if men like onions more than ladies?

But, do you know that the lowly onion has been quite useful in the field of medicine for over 4,000 years?

In your garden or grocery shelf, onion is available in many forms including red, green, yellow and white. Each of these types have a different 'flavor' and differ in their pungency.

In early America and China, wild onions were used as a treatment for cold, cough, asthma, angina and breathing problems. Many cultures believe that onion juice rubbed all over the body, or given orally brings stamina and vitality.

In 1919 when the flu killed 40 million people there was a doctor that visited the many farmers to see if he could help them combat the flu. Many of the farmers and their families had contracted it and died.

One day, the doctor came upon one farm familty and to his surprise, everyone was very healthy. When the doctor asked what the farmer was doing that was different, his wife replied that she had placed an unpeeled onion in a dish in the rooms of the home, (probably only two rooms back then).

The doctor couldn't believe it and asked if he could have one of the onions and place it under the microscope. She gave him one and when he did this, he did find the flu virus in the onion. It obviously absorbed the bacteria, therefore, keeping the family healthy.

Another story is from a hairdresser. She reported that several years ago, many of her employees were coming down with the flu, and so were many of her customers.

The next year she placed several bowls with onions around in her shop. To her surprise, none of her staff got sick.

Another note of interest is that onions and garlic placed around the room saved many from the black plague years ago. They have powerful antibacterial, antiseptic properties.

We are nearing the flu season. One thing I am going to try is setting onions around my house to see if they really attract germs and if they prevent the flu. Who knows? It is worth a try.

Do you like onions? Do you think they have medicinal qualities? If a couple both eat onions, can they smell it on each other? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.