

Carrots

Did You Know

- The carrot is a root vegetable of the Apiaceae family. The edible part of a carrot is known as a taproot.
- Carrots originated in central Asia over a thousand years ago. The original carrots were purple to black in color and much woodier in texture. Europeans started enjoying carrots as a staple food in the 13th century.
- Today carrots come in many colors including purple, black, yellow, orange, red, and white and also range in size from a round 2-inch carrot to a slender 3-foot carrot!
- The average person eats 17 pounds of carrots per year. How many pounds of carrots do you eat?
- Baby-cut carrots are made from full-grown, thin carrots by peeling and cutting them to the desired size and shape. True baby carrots are harvested early and actually look like miniature carrots.
- Carrots are well known for containing high amounts of beta carotene, an antioxidant which is a form of vitamin A. Beta carotene is important for eyesight, healthy skin, and growing bodies. It may also help reduce chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Beta carotene was first discovered in carrots, therefore its name came from carrots. Carrots are also a source of vitamin C and potassium, and like most vegetables, a source of fiber.

Grow Your Own

Plant carrot seeds directly in the garden four weeks before the last frost. Some shorter varieties are suitable to container planting. Carrot seeds are small and can be difficult for children to evenly space when planting. Seed tape, on which carrot seeds are glued, can be helpful for planting carrots with kids. Carrots are a biennial plant. In the first year, the plant forms the taproot, which we eat, and foliage. In the second year, the plant grows larger foliage, flowers, and seeds. Consider leaving a carrot over winter to see the carrot's interesting flower the second summer.

Buying Tips

Carrots are usually sold without the stems and leaves to reduce moisture loss. If carrots still have tops, avoid carrots with wilted or brown tops. Select carrots that are firm and bright. Larger carrots generally have a tougher texture, but are great for soups and recipes in which the carrots

are cooked. Store carrots in the refrigerator in a perforated plastic bag or wrapped in a paper towel for 1-3 weeks. Avoid storing carrots near items that produce ethylene gas like apples or potatoes. Carrots lose moisture through their leafy green tops, so remove the tops before storing.

Cooking

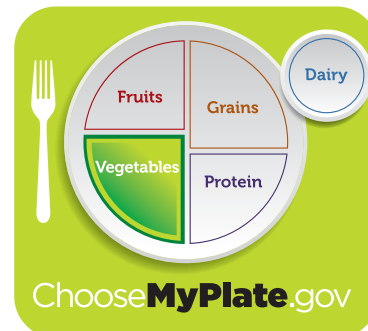
Carrots are excellent eaten raw or cooked. Grate raw carrots for salads, slaw, or to add to sandwiches. Roasted carrots are also fantastic and easy to make. Cut carrots into fries or 1/4 inch – 1/2 inch sections. Toss with olive oil, salt, and desired seasonings. Spread on baking sheet and roast at 400°F for 20-30 minutes or until crisp.

Conversation Starters

- Raw carrots are crunchy. What else do you eat that is crunchy?
- Cooked carrots are squishy. What else do you eat that is squishy?
- Q: What's orange and sounds like a parrot? A: A carrot.
- What did the carrot say to the onion? Nothing. Vegetables don't talk!

Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit:
mtharvestofthemonth.org.



Carrot Pumpkin Muffins

Servings
6

Ingredients

- 1/2   _____ 1/2 cup all purpose white flour
- 2/3   _____ 2/3 cup whole wheat flour
-   _____ 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4   _____ 1/4 tsp each of nutmeg, baking soda and salt
-  _____ 1 egg
-   _____ 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
-   _____ 1 Tbsp applesauce
- 1/2   _____ 1/2 cup canned pumpkin
- 1/2   _____ 1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
-   _____ 1 cup raw carrots, grated

Tools

-  Mixing Bowl
-  Electric Mixer
-  Measuring Cups and Spoons
-  Spatula
-  Muffin Tin
-  Muffin Tin Liners

Directions

1. Combine flour, spices, baking soda, and salt in bowl.
2. In mixing bowl with paddle attachment, beat oil, applesauce, pumpkin, sugar, and eggs. Beat for approximately 3 minutes, scraping down bowl as necessary.
3. Add the flour mixture to the pumpkin applesauce mixture, and continue to blend for 2 minutes.
4. Fold in grated carrots.
5. Spoon mixture into muffin baking papers until about 3/4 full.
6. Bake in preheated 325°F oven for about 35 minutes. Check muffins every 5 minutes after they've been in the oven for 30 minutes by inserting a toothpick into the center of a muffin. When it comes out clean, the muffins will be done.



2 Montana Harvest of the Month: Carrots



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Organic Association, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemonth.org

Funds were provided in part by a USDA Team Nutrition Training grant, a USDA Farm to School grant, Montana Healthcare Foundation, Northern Pulse Growers Association, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and Montana School Nutrition Association. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach. This publication was supported by the Grants or Cooperative Agreements Numbers, 6 U58DP004818-03-01 & 5 U58DP004818-03-00, and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the DPHHS.