

ROOTS & TUBERS



A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO SHOPPING, COOKING & EATING "GREEN"



Radish

Radishes come in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes, with mildly pungent to peppery hot flavor. The older the radish, the hotter it becomes. *(Fall)*

Selection & Storage: This root is best when smooth, firm and crisp.

Culinary Tips: Crisp, fresh radish makes a good garnish and addition to salads. Try mixing thinly sliced radish to cooked, cooled corn with some chopped green onions. To cook, briefly steam for a delicate, sweet flavor reminiscent of a turnip. Radish tops give a peppery taste to salads and soups.

Health Benefits: Radishes are diuretic, stimulating and help to clear the sinuses. The radish is good for sore throats and to help prevent viral infections.

Rutabaga

(Swedish Turnip) The rutabaga has a mild, sweet flavor that absorbs other flavors. Rutabagas are larger and darker than turnips and they have a smooth skin. *(Fall through Winter)*

Culinary Tips: Peel and use raw or steamed, baked, roasted, boiled, or mashed (great with mashed carrots and potatoes). Add to soups and stews. To use raw in a salad, try grating coarsely and mix with a creamy dressing and chopped dates.

Note: *Rutabagas can be irritating to people with kidney problems.*

Sunchokes

(Jerusalem Artichokes) This knobby tuber has a crisp flesh with a mildly sweet flavor. *(Late Fall through Winter)*

Selection & Storage: Once cut, store in cold water with lemon juice to preserve color.

Culinary Tips: Delicious when sliced or grated raw into salads. Use as a substitute for water chestnuts in stir-fries, noodle or rice dishes. Cook and mash into pureed vegetables, add to soup or tomato sauce, or serve hot with parsley and butter or olive oil.

Health Benefits: Sunchokes are a good source of iron, thiamine, vitamins B6 and C.

Sweet Potato

Commonly referred to as "yams" in the United States, these tubers are distinctly different from the brown, woody skinned yams used in African and Caribbean cooking.

Sweet potatoes have a rich and sweet flavor with a dense, mealy flesh. Yellow flesh varieties tend to have drier texture and mildly sweet flavor; ones with orange flesh have a sweeter flavor and more watery texture. *(Fall)*

Selection & Storage: Sweet potatoes should be kept in a cool, dry place, but not the refrigerator.

Culinary Tips: Boil, roast, steam, bake or add to casseroles or sweet dishes. Excellent with sweet spices, such as cinnamon, ground cloves, nutmeg and allspice.

Glaze with maple syrup and butter for a rich, sweet dish. Peeled and mashed sweet potatoes make a good substitute for flour (up to ¼ of the total called for) in baked goods.

Health Benefits: Sweet potatoes are packed with nutrition and are easily digestible. They are an excellent source of vitamin A and a good source of potassium and vitamin C. They are also known for their ability to detoxify metals in the body.

Taro

(Dasheen, Malanga) Taro is a high carbohydrate food with chestnut and potato flavors. *(Winter)*

Selection & Storage: Choose firm and plump roots. Store out of the refrigerator.

Culinary Tips: Taro is best when peeled, then steamed or boiled and added to soups or stews. It may also be baked with a flavorful sauce.

Pan-fried taro root is excellent. Serve taro piping hot. The greens may be eaten in soups and stir-fries, removing the strings first.

Note: *Taro is poisonous when uncooked!*

Turnip

Raw turnips impart a mild, radish flavor. When cooked, turnips become delicately sweet and succulent, absorbing other flavors well. *(Fall through Winter)*

Selection & Storage: Choose small to medium sized roots for best flavor and texture.

Health Benefits: Raw turnips aid digestion and help clean the teeth. Cooked turnips energize the digestive system.

Note: *Turnips and rutabagas contain high amounts of goitrogens which can interfere with thyroid function. Individuals with low thyroid function should limit their use.*

Water Chestnut

The Chinese water chestnut has a taste similar to sugar cane, sweet corn and coconut. It has a delicate, mild flavor with a refreshing, crunchy texture. *(Winter)*

Selection & Storage: This tuber should be rock hard when selected.

Culinary Tips: They are excellent with stir-fried vegetables or in noodle or rice dishes.

Health Benefits: Water chestnuts have a cooling quality and are beneficial for diabetes, jaundice and metal detoxification.

Sources: *The Complete Vegetarian Cuisine* by Rose Elliot, *The Wellness Encyclopedia* by UCB Wellness Letter Editors and *Whole Foods Companion* by Dianne Onstad.

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• BUY CERTIFIED ORGANIC GROWN WHENEVER POSSIBLE •

Beet

A Swiss chard relative, usually a deep, reddish purple color with a sweet, earthy flavor; white and golden varieties exist. (*Winter through Spring*)

Culinary tips: Peel, grate raw and mix with equal amounts of grated apple and some raisins, or sliced onion rings and vinaigrette.

Cooked beets are tasty when pickled, boiled, baked and in soups. Beet greens may be used like chard.

To cook, scrub gently and rinse well, leaving root untrimmed. Cook until tender, drain and rinse under cold water, then peel.

Colorful and delicious served warm with vinegar or citrus juice, ground pepper, fresh herbs, and a drizzle of olive oil or butter.

Other suggestions: Serve with a sweet and sour dressing; creamy yogurt sauce with horseradish and fresh dill; ginger, caraway seeds, cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon.

Health Benefits: The beet is an excellent body cleanser and acid eliminator, also noted for its blood detoxification and ability to relieve constipation.

Burdock

(*Gobo Root, Beggar's Button*) This thin, brown-skinned root has a rich, heady aroma reminiscent of freshly dug soil and a strong earthy flavor. (*Year-round*)

Selection & Storage: Best when firm and somewhat crisp. Store in a damp cloth or paper towel in refrigerator.

Culinary Tips: Scrub well, then slice or sliver, and add to soups, stews, vegetable, noodle or grain dishes. Cooked (slightly longer than carrots), it has a pleasant chewy texture and subtly sweet taste.

Health Benefits: High in magnesium, potassium and folacin, burdock is excellent for the kidneys and purifies the blood.

Carrot

One of the most versatile and nutritious vegetables with their sweet taste and crisp texture, carrots are great for appetizers, main dishes, and desserts. (*Winter through Summer*)

Selection & Storage: For the sweetest and most tender, choose thin and smaller carrots. Freshly picked with the green tops still intact are best. More orange means more beta carotene.

Culinary Tips: Eat raw or cooked, good with apples and nuts. Green carrot tops can be eaten raw in salads or pureed for sauces and soups.

Health Benefits: An excellent detoxifier, diuretic and stimulant, the carrot is high in phosphorus, silicon, and abundant in vitamins, minerals and enzymes; extraordinarily rich in the antioxidant beta carotene (vitamin A's precursor).

Celeriac

(*Celery root, Knob Celery*) This root tastes like a combination of celery and parsley, with a stronger, smoky flavor. (*Winter to Spring*)

Selection & Storage: Choose firm, smaller roots.

Culinary Tips: Discard the stalks and leaves and use as turnips, either raw or cooked. Cut in fine julienne strips or grate and serve raw with a vinaigrette. Purée cooked celeriac and mix with mashed potatoes.

Health Benefits: High in vitamin C, potassium and phosphorus, celeriac is a diuretic, good for kidney stones as well as the lymphatic, nervous and urinary systems.

Daikon

This long, white Japanese root tastes like a cross between a turnip and a radish with its slightly hot taste. (*Winter*)

Culinary Tips: Daikon may be sliced or grated raw into salads and stir-fries. Daikon adds a nice flavor to soups or stews and is traditionally served pickled.

Health Benefits: Raw daikon is used as a digestive aid.

Lotus Root

This starchy, yet crunchy root has a mild, slightly sweet flesh. (*Winter*)

Culinary Tips: Lotus root remains crunchy when cooked. Peel, then slice thinly or grate. Use like turnips or potatoes.

Health Benefits: Lotus root is warming, good for lung ailments and increasing energy. It is also a digestive aid and helps control blood pressure.

Parsnip

This sweet, nutty flavored root looks like a chunky, white carrot. (*Fall through Winter*)

Selection & Storage: Choose firm and smooth roots.

Culinary Tips: A small amount of parsnip adds a snappy touch to a salad when grated raw. To cook parsnips, steam, don't boil, then peel and serve with salt, pepper, and a small pat of butter.

Parsnips may also be roasted or added to soups and stews. Parsnips have a strong, dominating flavor, so use with discretion. They make a zesty addition to a baked root medley.

Health Benefits: Parsnips are loaded with food energy and have diuretic, detoxifying and cleansing attributes.

Potato

Potatoes come in a variety of colors and tend to be either "waxy" types with moist, translucent flesh or "floury" types with a dry, fluffy texture when cooked. (*Spring through Fall*)

Selection & Storage: Choose firm potatoes with no green skin. Store in a cool, dark place (not refrigerator).

Culinary Tips: Remove sprouts and green spots. Potatoes may be boiled, baked, roasted, fried, steamed, mashed, and are excellent in soups, salads and casseroles.

Health Benefits: An excellent fuel food, potatoes are rich in vitamin C and potassium, enzymes and minerals.