



Carrots!

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Did you know that carrots first were used as a medicine for a variety of ailments, not for eating? Carrots come in more colors than just orange. You can find purple, red, white and yellow varieties of this vegetable.

Growing

Nantes varieties are generally recommended for home gardeners. Before sowing seeds, prepare the soil. Deep, loose, well-drained soils will produce the straightest, smoothest carrots. Compost may be added to improve soil fertility.

Sow in early spring to midsummer. Sow seeds $\frac{1}{3}$ inch apart, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep, in rows spaced 18 to 24 inches apart. If necessary, thin seedlings to stand 1 to 2 inches apart.

Don't allow the soil to crust until seedlings emerge; this may take up to three weeks. Carrot beds can be sprinkled with mulch to retain moisture and to block sunlight that turns carrot crowns green.

Harvesting

Dig carrots when they reach a desired length. This is usually 60 to 80 days after sowing. Keeping the roots in the ground for a month or longer after this time may reduce taste qualities and lead to cracking.

Storing

Fresh-harvested carrots should be scrubbed to remove excess dirt and washed in cold water. Then cut about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the top of each carrot, removing the greens. Air-dry the carrots and store them in an air-tight plastic bag in the refrigerator to maintain proper humidity. If the carrots are not in air-tight bags, they may become limp in the refrigerator. Carrots will maintain their freshness longer at or around 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

Preparing

Carrots can be cooked in the oven, microwave, on the stove top or in a slow cooker. For example, cover carrots with foil for cooking in the oven; bake at 425 F for 30 minutes. Cut larger carrots into strips or smaller coin shapes, depending on the cooking plan. Toss carrots in olive oil, salt, pepper and other seasonings for added flavor. Garlic, balsamic vinegar, butter, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup, lemon zest, chives, green onions and chili powder are good accompaniments to carrots.

Preserving

Did you know that carrots were the first commercially canned vegetable? Carrots can be frozen, pressure-canned, pickled or dehydrated.

Follow current pressure-canning procedures in the NDSU Extension publication ["Home Canning Low-acid Vegetables"](#) (FN173).

For more information about freezing, see the NDSU Extension publication ["Freezing Vegetables"](#) (FN187).

For more information about pickling, see the NDSU Extension publication ["Making Pickled Products"](#) (FN189).

Nutrition

One medium-sized carrot (about 7 inches) has 35 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g protein, 9 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 45 mg sodium. Carrots are notable sources of beta-carotene, which the human body converts to vitamin A. Vitamin A promotes healthy skin and eyes.



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Recipes

Key to abbreviations

c. = cup

tsp. = teaspoon

Tbsp. = tablespoon

g = gram

mg = milligram



Roasted Carrot and Pear Soup

- 4 c. carrots, peeled and cut
- 2 pears, peeled and cut
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme (used in roasting pan)
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 1 tsp. grated fresh ginger
- 6 c. vegetable stock
- Optional: fresh thyme to garnish

Preheat oven to 400 F. In a large bowl, toss carrots and pears with 1 Tbsp. olive oil, salt and thyme sprigs. Place mixture in a shallow roasting pan with cover. Roast for 40 minutes or until tender, stirring halfway through cooking. When carrot mixture is almost ready, place large soup pot over medium heat. Add 1 Tbsp. oil and onions, and cook until tender. Stir in garlic and ginger, and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add the roasted carrots and pears to soup pot, discarding the thyme stems. Add vegetable stock and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, until carrots are soft. Use a blender or immersion blender to puree the soup until smooth.

Makes eight (1 cup) servings. Each serving has 90 calories, 3.5 g fat, 1 g protein, 16 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber and 120 mg sodium.

Roasted Dill Carrots

- 36 baby carrots
- 2 Tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. minced fresh dill

Preheat oven to 400 F. Cut baby carrots diagonally. Toss carrots in oil. Season with salt and pepper; toss again. Use sheet pan with parchment paper and transfer carrots in 1 layer. Roast in oven for 1 hour or until browned, stirring occasionally. Toss carrots with dill after they are finished roasting.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 90 calories, 7 g fat, 1 g protein, 8 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 650 mg sodium.



Carrot Muffins

- 1 large egg
- 1 c. unsweetened applesauce
- ½ c. honey
- 3 Tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1½ c. whole-wheat flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 c. finely shredded carrots

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a large bowl, combine egg, applesauce, honey, oil and vanilla. In another bowl, combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Stir into wet ingredients. Fold the shredded carrots into the muffin batter. Place batter into greased or lined muffin tin. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the muffin center comes out clean. Cool muffins before serving.

Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 170 calories, 5 g fat, 3 g protein, 31 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 200 mg sodium.



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